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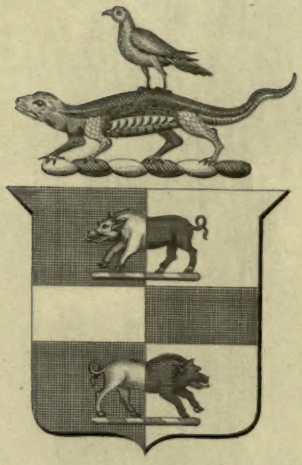

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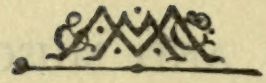

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VICEROY AND ALL HIS GENERALS IN FRONT OF THE PORT ARTHUR HEADQUARTERS. [*Frontispiece.*

MANCHU
AND
MUSCOVITE

BY

B. L. PUTNAM WEALE

Being Letters from Manchuria
Written during the Autumn of 1903

WITH AN HISTORICAL SKETCH
ENTITLED
"PROLOGUE TO THE CRISIS"
Giving a Complete Account of the Manchurian Frontiers from the Earliest Days and the Growth and Final Meeting of the Russian and Chinese Empires in the Amur Regions

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PREFACE

THAT there is a serious need for a book on things Manchurian brought down to the very last moment of the great Far Eastern crisis, no one will doubt. The extraordinary ignorance in Europe about the actual conditions existing in the disputed territory, the very childishness of the statements made far and wide, have prompted me to suppose that a candid and unvarnished account by one who has at least known his Far East since his first days will do something to dispel this curious mystery surrounding the Muscovite in the Manchu's home.

So far as I have been able to learn there have been but two books published since 1900 dealing with the Russians in Manchuria. They are: Mr. Wirt Gerrare's "Greater Russia," and Mr. Alexander Ular's "Un Empire Russo-Chinois." In both publications the authors, after dealing exhaustively with questions foreign to the three eastern provinces, stray apparently, as an afterthought, into the Manchurian *impasse*, and become hopelessly bogged. Of course Mr. Ular wrote his

book for the French public—a public that has little knowledge of the Far East. I have been forced to take Mr. Ular seriously to task for some of his statements, since it is largely the circulation of such matter which has shaken people's judgment on a not too difficult question.

Mr. Wirt Gerrare's work is of course not to be compared with the "Russo-Chinese Empire," for his book was written with the object rather of making a sketch of modern Siberia than anything else. The greatest fault I have to find is that a subject so vast as the Manchurian one is so casually treated, and tacked on, as it were, to the question of Siberia. Unfortunately, nearly all Mr. Gerrare's Manchurian data are likewise wrong, and Manchuria seems to be completely misunderstood by him. I need but give a few instances: Mr. Gerrare states that the population of Manchuria is 7½ millions, whereas the most conservative estimates place it at least 10 millions higher, and the Japanese Staff at 20 millions. Again he says that Fengtien province resembles China proper in all respects, whilst Kirin and Hei-lung-chiang are more like Siberia. This is quite wrong. The entire colonised area in Manchuria—that is, the country from the Liaotung to a point about one hundred miles north of Harbin—is all the same in outward aspect, although this cultivated belt runs through all three provinces. The eastern half of Fengtien is much like the eastern half of Kirin, with mountains and forests; but the colonisation

by Northern Chinese is rapidly changing the aspect of the country. Tsitsihar in Hei-lung-chiang province is just like any other Northern Chinese town, although it lies hundreds of miles away from Fengtien province. Petuna and Ninguta are also ordinary Chinese towns, although they lie in the extreme opposite corners of Kirin province. Mr. Gerrare speaks of "Mantzi" labourers, and gives a photograph showing a "Mantzi" village. I do not know what "Mantzi" means, but I recognise in the photograph ordinary Northern Chinese and Northern Chinese houses. Perhaps the explanation is to be found in the fact that illiterate Russian soldiery have a way of calling Chinese "Mantzi"; possibly imagining that they are dealing with Manchus, although the Manchus have long ceased to exist as a separate race. Again Mr. Gerrare gives some interesting details about Russian colonisation in Manchuria, but what he says is in no agreement with the facts in 1903. There are no Russians in Manchuria or Kuantung, except the eighty-nine thousand troops scattered along the railway, twenty thousand women in the three towns of Harbin, Port Arthur, and Dalny, and a constantly diminishing number of male civilians in the same places. Manchuria is as purely Chinese as the Yangtsze valley, and there is nothing mysterious about it. I could go on multiplying the instances of inaccuracies and misconceptions in Mr. Gerrare's book, but it would serve no useful purpose to do so. It is a pity that an interesting

book should have attempted a casual discussion of Manchuria.

As a matter of fact, there is but one book on Manchuria, and it is Mr. Consul-General Hosie's excellent work. But Mr. Hosie is in the Government service, and must therefore speak with caution. In addition to this, his book only brings us down to 1900. It was impossible to deal with the question of the Russians in Manchuria then, since they had only begun to pour into the country whilst his book was going to press. The most important things are therefore necessarily omitted, and though his "Manchuria" will long remain the standard work of reference, some of the most interesting pages in the history of the country will have to be sought for elsewhere. I have used Mr. Hosie's data in several places, and I acknowledge fully my indebtedness to him.

Another interesting work on Manchurian travel is Mr. James's "Long White Mountain"; but this was written some years ago, and Mr. James knew nothing of the Chinese when he started on his lengthy travels. A third work, sometimes consulted by students of Manchuria, is "The Manchus," by Dr. Ross. This is, however, at best a very obscure work, and is far too dry for the modern reader.

The scope of my own pages is very easily explained. I was commissioned to write a series of letters from Manchuria for some Far Eastern publications, and so during the months of September, October, and November of 1903 I travelled the

country and gave my impressions. Although I wrote as a new-comer, I will not disguise the fact that Manchuria was perfectly familiar to me, and that I had been there often before. But I wished the country as it actually is since the Russians have come, to grow up before the eyes of the reader : to allow all to see with my own eyes, and to understand the weakness of the Russian position. As I travelled farther afield, it seemed to me advisable that special points should be separately treated in detail, and that subjects like the rouble, the railway, and the Russo-Chinese Bank should be dissected. This I duly did, and I have been assured that my inconsiderable efforts have thrown some light on somewhat obscure points.

These letters, therefore, thirty-two in number, constitute the bulk of my book, and I have left them practically as they were originally written. To these letters, which I have arranged so that they may not overweary the reader, I have added a "Prologue to the Crisis," which is in the nature of an historical sketch giving some detail of the Manchu and Muscovite in their earlier days ; and showing how the fates have slowly pushed them together. The data concerning the Russian side of the question I have taken from Ravenstein's book, "The Russians on the Amur." Finally, at the end will be found a general statistical note, embodying all the necessary information.

Having paid some attention to the Manchurian question, I am fully aware that my writings are very

faulty; for many things which should be included have been necessarily omitted. But to write a complete history treating every phase comprehensively would mean a volume of a thousand pages; and fat volumes are undesirable with the scant time the world now has for study. If, however, I have succeeded in giving a good general idea of the complete failure which Russia has made in Manchuria, of the extraordinary conditions which to-day exist, the corruption, the licentiousness, the "life apart" of the railway empire, and certain other things, my object will have been accomplished, and I shall be quite content.

Of late years, too, many have taken upon themselves the pleasant task of flashing through a country and then writing an exhaustive account, and the day is not far distant when a history of China and its many-sided people may be expected from the hands of people who have touched for a few hours at Hong Kong and Shanghai in the mail-boats. But as a matter of fact, it is the merest foolishness for people to write books about anything Chinese when they do not know the language, the history, mode of thought, and most important of all, the "atmosphere" of the country. In China "atmosphere" is of the utmost importance, and unless you understand that thoroughly, as well as the language, you must necessarily be quite at sea. Some few men, however, who do not know Chinese have been able, by being thoroughly saturated by the "atmosphere," by holding converse with men

who are practical sinologues, and also from the fact that they have exceptionally keen intelligences, to see things in their proper proportion. Such a man is Dr. Morrison, the distinguished Peking correspondent of the *Times*. He alone of all correspondents in China is worthy of being listened to ; he alone has seen things in their true light. In China the great Far Eastern war will perhaps be called the " *Times* War."

But although the crisis has been acute for more than half a year, the general ignorance is fitly portrayed by the remark made scarcely three months ago by one of the best informed periodicals in London. " We do not know what it is all about, but we suppose that it is the question of Korea," it calmly said, and then let the question drop. Yet it is not the question of Korea which is about to be decided. It is the fate of the Far East.

B. L. PUTNAM WEALE.

CHINA, *February*, 1904.

Publishers' Note

Readers should understand that Mr. Weale's very timely and instructive book was written before the outbreak of war between Russia and Japan, although several of his forecasts, as, *e.g.*, the taking of Dalny, have already been fulfilled.

June, 1904.

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MANCHU AND MUSCOVITE

PROLOGUE TO THE CRISIS

In the beginning, Manchuria must be merely pictured as part of that vast expanse labelled by mediæval geographers as Tartary, which, stretching from the oases of what is to-day Eastern Turkestan, spread across the rolling plains and dismal deserts of Mongolia, jumped where now is the great wall of China, wound over river, mountain, and dale, and ended only with ice-cold waters of the furthest north-east.

Two thousand years before Christ, Chinese tradition has it that the whole of Manchuria of to-day was peopled by savages, clothed in the conventional rag and smeared with the conventional grease of prehistoric times. Whether the descendants of these men are to be found in the hairy and non-hairy tribes still inhabiting parts of the island of Saghalien, the shores of the sea of Okhotsk and the

mouth and lower reaches of the great Amur, it is impossible to say, but native story-books contain curious fables about hairy men in the far north, pointing towards this supposition.

If Chinese histories are right, concerning thirty centuries ago, the conditions of to-day are, to some extent, a reproduction of what was then to be noticed. In those days the north and east were peopled by hunter clans of indigenous tribes, and the south, or what is to-day Fengtien Province, was the settled and affluent portion of the country, with hosts of Chinese and Koreans constantly pushing the aborigines away.

According to tradition, the influx of these civilised settlers led to the foundation of a kingdom in the south of Liaotung as early as 1122 B.C., or over three thousand years ago. It would appear that this little kingdom represented a species of civilisation, and remained independent for upwards of a thousand years, in strong contrast to central and northern Manchuria, still only inhabited by nomadic Tunguzian tribes. The great Chinese dynasty of the Hans finally upset this kingdom in the second century before Christ, and thus for the first time a portion of Manchuria came under direct control of the Chinese throne.

In due course, the power of the Hans waned and collapsed, and the dependency of the Liaotung underwent a number of changes. First it became a feudal kingdom. Then a dynasty, called the Northern Wei, seized it, only to be ejected by

another dynasty in the third century of the Christian era. A Korean dynasty ruling northern Korea, and called Kao-li (the present Chinese name for Korea), sent armies across the Yalu and captured the Liaotung, which they ruled for several centuries. Evidences of the Korean rule are to be met with in many places in Fengtien Province even to-day; and there are some old mines with galleries extending for miles underneath the earth which have been recently discovered by the Chinese and attributed to the early Korean conquest.

In the seventh century another powerful Chinese dynasty again annexed this much-disputed soil of the Liaotung, and once more it passed under Chinese rule.

It was about this time that the Tunguzian tribes of Central and Northern Manchuria began to give signs of future greatness. These ancestors of the Manchus, originally called Su-chen, began by organising themselves into petty States. The different stages through which they passed are not highly interesting, and need not be considered. Probably in the seventh century, the southern branch of the organised tribes began to make great progress, and finally developed into a powerful Tunguzian State called Bohai. Early in the eighth century this State had so extended its dominions that it had absorbed the greater part of modern Manchuria, including the much-desired Liaotung, and was directly recognised by the Emperor of China. It is believed that the neighbourhood of Ninguta was

the centre of this mediæval kingdom, and vast ruins discovered in its vicinity point to this supposition. This, according to the native chroniclers, was the golden age of Manchuria, with every plain tilled and thickly populated. Learning and literature flourished and were assiduously cultivated; but the march of ages has destroyed all vestiges of this ancient civilisation, and tradition is now our only authority.

The State of Bohai was short-lived in spite of its magnificence; for, in the tenth century, another powerful Tunguzian tribe, the Khetans, whose habitat was in Central Manchuria, began to make themselves felt and respected. After many decades of raids, these barbarians succeeded in effecting a lodgment in Peking itself, and in ejecting the Chinese dynasty called Sung. This tribe's rulers dubbed themselves the Liao or Iron Dynasty, and ruled North China as far south as the Yellow River and the greater portion of Manchuria.

A second Tunguzian tribe, from between the Sungari and the Hurka, finally overthrew the Liao Dynasty, and also placed themselves on the Peking throne as the Chin or Golden Dynasty. This tribe of men, called the Nu-Chens, were undoubtedly the ancestors of the modern Manchus. The power of these early kingdoms never extended south of the Yellow River; and, although they nominally ruled Manchuria, it is plain that their control must have been of the very feeblest character and confined entirely to the cities.

At length, in the twelfth century, we meet Jenghis Khan, the great Mongol. This illustrious leader of men is reputed to have been born in the Hsing-an Mountains of Heilungchiang Province, and to have swept south with that irresistible force which so many tribes had already shown before him. Decades of warfare broke down the Chinese resistance and swept the Chin Dynasty of the Nu-Chens back into Manchuria. Kublai Khan, a grandson of the great Jenghis, founded the Mongol Dynasty under the title of the Yuan Dynasty in the thirteenth century, and succeeded in welding China together again into one vast country after many centuries of division. History does not tell us whether the Mongols extended their rule over Manchuria or no.

These centuries of warfare, and the drafting away of all the able-bodied fighting men from Manchuria, had told on the country, and there can be no doubt that about the time of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Manchuria was quite depopulated. But Manchuria was rapidly being prepared for events of no little importance.

In the fourteenth century, the Chinese dynasty of the Ming unseated the Mongols, and extended the authority of Peking directly over the whole of the Liaotung, although the independent tribes of Central and Upper Manchuria were not interfered with. During the Ming Dynasty, the Liao-chou-Wei, or the districts adjoining the Liao, which enjoyed Chinese rule, became more and more settled, and trade and industry flourished.

At last, in the sixteenth century, we come to the Manchus. In a secluded valley, called Hotuala, ninety miles east of Moukden, and sixty miles from the frontiers of the Ming-governed province, a child of a Nu-Chen tribe was born, called Nurhachu. Nurhachu is said to have given early indications of his future greatness. The native chroniclers naïvely say that he was a thirteen months child, had the dragon face and the phœnix eye, an enormous chest, big ears and a voice like the tone of the largest bell. Not content with this, his descendants claim a miraculous ancestry for him, as is the manner for all Eastern great men. They say that a maiden of unsullied purity gave birth to the original progenitor of the race from which Nurhachu sprang, and the site indicated as the one in which the immaculate conception took place, is a spot called Odoli, in the middle of the Ever-White-Mountains. But the fact that a lusty Shantung serving-man is mentioned in other chronicles in connection with the maid tends to throw some doubt on the veracity of the whole story, and points to a somewhat mixed origin for the doughty warrior.

The hills and dales surrounding Nurhachu's birthplace were divided at the time amongst numerous little clans of his own countrymen, constantly at war with one another, and so barbarous that the Chinese of the settled districts of the Liaotung would have no dealings with them. Nurhachu was the grandson of a petty chief, who owned a few villages with probably only two or three score

of inhabitants. In consequence of some trouble with a neighbouring Manchu town, Nurhachu's father and grandfather were treacherously slain by a countryman of their own, named Nikan, who was in league with the Chinese authorities on the Liaotung frontiers. Nurhachu promptly swore vengeance, and vowed that he would sacrifice 200,000 Chinese in honour of his father's funeral. The Chinese seem not to have doubted the sincerity of this threat, for they sought to calm Nurhachu by hanging up the bodies of the slain, and making a gift of horses. But so as to protect their own frontier, they made Nikan lord of the whole region, and responsible for the maintenance of order amongst all his countrymen. Nurhachu replied by declaring war to the knife against everybody, and, beginning with a paltry army of 130 men, in three years he became so formidable, that the Chinese handed up Nikan to appease his wrath, and Nurhachu tore out his heart.

When Nurhachu was but twenty-eight years old, he built his first small capital, a tiny town surrounded by a small mud wall, whose outline may be traced even to-day. At forty-four years of age, a second and larger town—Hsing Ching—was constructed, and the subjugation of surrounding tribes undertaken on a far more extensive scale. Successes everywhere crowned Nurhachu's efforts, and by 1625, when he was sixty-six years old, he was practically overlord of all Manchuria.

In 1617, Nurhachu had declared war against the Ming Emperor of China. In 1618, he captured

Fu-shun, then a frontier town of Liaotung. But such was the prestige of the Dragon Throne and Nurhachu's own insignificance in those days, that he appears to have been appalled by his own audacity, and to have sued for peace and pardon. His overtures, however, were treated with disdain. The Chinese Viceroy of the Liaotung was ordered to chastise the insolent rebel, and soon advanced on Nurhachu's kingdom with four armies, said to have numbered fifty thousand men each. Confronted with a prospect of absolute annihilation, Nurhachu rose to the occasion and showed consummate generalship. Allowing the Chinese troops to advance into his own hills, he ambuscaded and destroyed the first two armies, and by stealth and strategy forced the other two into flight.

In 1620, the Ming Emperor, Wan-li, died, and the sceptre fell into nerveless hands. As soon as Nurhachu realised that the time had come to strike decisive blows, he acted with commendable promptness. Advancing with every man he could muster, he attacked and captured Moukden in 1621. A few weeks later Liaoyang fell, and it is recorded that Nurhachu made all the inhabitants shave their heads and adopt the Manchu queue. Continuing his triumphant march, the conqueror headed west, and crossing the river Liao, almost reached the Great Wall of China at Shanhaikwan, when he was stopped at the fortified town of Ning-yuan. Unable to capture it, in spite of the most vigorous assaults, he then retired, and in 1625 moved his

capital for the third and last time to Moukden. In 1627 he died, and was succeeded by his fourth son, Tai-tsung, who had greatly distinguished himself in the previous campaigns. The Manchu Empire, controlling a great portion of Manchuria, was now firmly established, and the Manchus considered themselves the equals of the Mings.

Tai-tsung continued the warfare with the Chinese generals with varying success, but in spite of numerous attempts he was unable to get through the Great Wall and enter the metropolitan province of Chihli. The city of Ning-yuan stood firm, and until it was reduced his armies were hopelessly blocked. Finally, seeing the uselessness of attempting the passage of the Great Wall near the sea, Tai-tsung adopted another plan of campaign. He formed an alliance with the Korchin Mongols, whose territory adjoins the west frontier of Manchuria, and marching through their country, succeeded in entering Chihli through a western pass, and at last attacked Peking. But Peking was too vast a city for the Manchus to be able to capture at that time, and after a number of vain assaults, Tai-tsung had to retire by the same road as he had come.

For fourteen years this warfare continued, Tai-tsung constantly invading Shansi and Chihli by the old road through Mongol territory, but always unable to beat down the defence of Ning-yuan and reach the Great Wall on its eastern extremity. Finally, Tai-tsung died, worn out by exertions, and was succeeded by his ninth son, the great Shun

Chin, destined to become the first Manchu emperor of China. Shun Chin being but a child of five when he succeeded his father, his uncle, Prince Dorgun, or the Ama-wang, became regent. The Peking throne, however, in spite of Manchu's aspirations, seemed as far off as ever, when at last an event occurred which gave the Manchus their opportunity.

For many years previous, China had been at the mercy of robbers and rebels, who infested every province and who were one of the direct results of the Ming degeneracy. So low had the Mings sunk that the government of the country was carried on almost entirely by eunuchs, who were numbered by the thousand, and were to be found not only in the capital, but also in many of the most distant provinces. These parasites cared for money, and for money alone, and so long as they were not disturbed in their pleasant business, they were indifferent as to whether China was torn to pieces or not. One of the rebel bandits exceeded all others in daring and cruelty. Through plundering and murdering on a colossal scale, and showing the most fiendish cruelty to all who refused to join him, he was able to gather a vast army, and marched on Peking. So weak had the Mings become, that the Ministers counselled compromising with the rebel, Li-tzu-Cheng, and not risking an open conflict. The last of the Mings, remembering his dignity at the eleventh hour, dramatically cut his throat to save himself from disgrace, an example

tearfully followed by his entire harem. Li-tzu-Cheng, pleasantly surprised at the rapidity with which success had crowned his plans, destroyed the Ming temples and ancestral tablets to show his contempt, and proclaimed himself Emperor of China.

In spite of this affront, there was only one man left in the eighteen provinces who was willing to challenge the usurper, and this man was Wu-san-kuei, the Chinese general in charge of the defences of the Shanhaikwan roads. No sooner had he heard of his Emperor's fate than he addressed a letter to the Manchu Prince Regent, proposing that the Manchu and Chinese Imperial troops should bury their old hates for the time being and march in company to the relief of Peking, and for the purpose of killing the usurper. Prince Dorgun promptly agreed to this amiable plan, and such were the Manchu powers of persuasion that Wu-san-kuei's troops were induced to shave their heads and adopt the Manchu badge of servitude, so that (in the words of the Regent) "there should be no danger of the Manchu troops mistaking them for enemies and slaying them later on." After a few short weeks' fighting Peking fell into the hands of the avengers, and then the redoubtable Wu-san-kuei politely thanked the Manchus for their assistance and assured them that he did not desire to exact any further service from them. But Prince Dorgun calmly answered that they had no intention of evacuating Peking, and once more exemplified that pregnant saying: "*j'y suis, j'y reste.*"

Meanwhile, Tartar reinforcements began to arrive, and Manchuria emptied itself into the Dragon capital. Martini, a Jesuit priest, says that a vast concourse of people and nations assembled at Peking as soon as the news had spread that the Chinese capital had fallen. Fish-skin Tartars, Mongols, Kalmucks, Siberians, Poles, Turks, all heard of the crash of the Chinese Empire, and hastened to the capital to share in the plunder. The looting of Peking has been the first act of every conqueror since the oldest times, and the people are accustomed to it.

In 1644 Prince Dorgun proclaimed the Manchu Dynasty as the Ta Ch'ing or great pure dynasty, and removed the capital from Moukden to Peking. Four armies were detached to conquer the provinces of Northern China, but although the Manchu *régime* dates from 1644, it was many years before the whole of the eighteen provinces were successfully occupied. In the south the Ming adherents proclaimed a grandson of Wan-li Emperor at Nanking, and risings took place everywhere. Rebel kings formed little kingdoms of their own, and for years the whole of China seethed in a hideous and prolonged agony, and only fourteen years of incessant warfare expelled the last rivals to the new power.

Some writers have expressed surprise at the rapidity of the Manchu success, and have said that it was nothing short of a miracle which allowed a petty Manchu State to seize and hold China's eighteen

vast provinces. But history has shown us that China has always been an easy prey for semi-barbarous conquerors from the north, and that, since the bulk of the Chinese population has always consisted of peaceful traders and farmers, so long as a new *régime* affords them adequate protection and does not arouse their enmity by oppressive taxation, they are indifferent as to who their rulers really are.

The Manchus possessed active and well-disciplined armies, whose ranks were filled with all the fiercest renegades from China and Mongolia. A half-century of incessant warfare had developed soldierly habits to the highest degree. Sleeping on the bare ground in summer's rain or winter's snow was habitual to them; and to such an extent did this hardy soldiery love the open air, that in towns they pulled down the walls of the houses so that they might sleep fanned by fresh breezes. If cooked meat was not to be had, raw was taken and devoured just as heartily. The Manchus were capital horsemen, although in the first instance they had been mountaineers. The great raids which they had made on China through Mongol territory for thirty years had brought them in contact with a race of born horsemen, where buckjumpers are ridden bareback. The arms of the Manchu soldiery were the long bow, the short stabbing sword, and the lance. Firearms were practically unknown until they had entered China, and were somewhat disdained by them. In their conquests they showed themselves humane when submission was quickly

made, and head-shaving and the Manchu queue were the only things strictly insisted on. The civil officials they appointed in the conquered provinces were Chinese, as had been the case before, and the Manchu authority was only represented by garrisons of Manchus under their own officers at the great centres. The so-called Tartar generals to be found to-day at a number of points scattered all over China are the last vestiges of the Manchu military system.

Great importance was attached by the Manchus to literary proficiency. In 1599 they had no Manchu alphabet, and the people were unutterably coarse. In 1636 it is recorded that a number of Manchu youths passed examinations at Moukden in Manchu, Mongol, and Chinese. Civilising and good as was the influence exerted on the coarse Manchu by the Chinese ethical system and culture, it was this which destroyed the Manchu simplicity and assimilated the whole race in very few years.

But while these far-reaching events were taking place during the seventeenth century in Southern Manchuria and China itself, others hardly less important in their influence on history are to be noticed elsewhere. It is time to speak of the Muscovite, and see how the fates were gradually but surely laying the foundations of the present crisis two and a-half centuries ago.

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The Russians crossed the Urals towards the end of the fifteenth century. In 1587 they founded

Tobolsk; in 1604 Tomsk; in 1619 Yeniseisk; in 1632 Yakutsk; and finally, in 1638, Okhotsk. It will be noticed that the first line of Russia's irresistible pressure towards the Pacific followed very northerly latitudes, and left the Baikal and Amur regions far to the south. All the towns of Eastern Siberia named above lie between latitude 55° and 65°, and have the Tablonoi and Stanovoi mountains interposed between them and the more desirable lands of the Amur.

It was a party of Cossacks engaged in making tributary the Tunguzians of the Aldan river, north of the Stanovoi mountains, who first heard of the existence of the Amur; and it is a curious fact that the river was no sooner learnt of than it seems to have exerted a mysterious attraction for all and to have given rise to the most extravagant tales. As this Tomsk party of Cossacks progressed farther and farther east, until they finally stood on the shores of the sea of Okhotsk, they heard fresh stories of tribes dwelling far to the south, who cultivated the soil and had corn for sale—a priceless treasure in these desolate northern climes; and when they reached a point near the mouth of the Amur a tribe called by them the Natkani showed them glass beads, copper vessels, silver ornaments, silk and cotton stuffs, which they alleged they had obtained from China and Japan.

In the same year another party of Cossacks from Yeniseisk heard confirmatory reports regarding the Shilka or upper Amur. They were told of a Prince

of the Daurians—another Tunguzian tribe—who had strongholds, and whose people kept cattle and tilled the soil, who worked silver and copper and carried on an active bartering trade with Chinese merchants in silk and cottons.

These various reports brought back and painfully spread over Siberia would appear to have made an immense impression. The Siberian settlements lying so far to the north and separated by immense distances, as distances went in those days, lacked many things, owing to the extreme climatic conditions from which they suffered, and it was therefore with some reason that these southern latitudes were constantly pictured as lands flowing with milk and honey.

It was the rising town of Yakutsk, becoming famous through the fur trade, that was destined to be the starting-point for a number of expeditions, and to have the honour of opening up an unknown country. The first expedition sent failed ignominiously. The second ascended the Aldan river in 1643, made sledges, and after suffering great hardships, succeeded in reaching the Dzeya, a river which falls into the Amur near Blagoveschensk of to-day. Here the first reindeer Tunguzians were met. As they proceeded down the Dzeya, other Tunguzians with horned cattle were seen, and finally a Daurian village was reached, the inhabitants of which tilled the soil. These Daurians gave information about the country beyond them—the country contained in the Manchurian provinces of Kirin and Heilung-

chiang. A khan, they said, named Borboi, dwelt in a fortified town six weeks' journey from them. He had not yet succeeded in making tributary all the tribes of the Amur, and occasionally sent out two or three thousand men armed with spears, bows, and firearms to collect tribute from all who offered resistance. It is interesting here to remember that Shun Chih, the first Manchu Emperor proclaimed Emperor of China, ascended the Dragon Throne in 1644, and that the province of Heilungchiang was not incorporated with Manchuria until 1671. It seems probable that the khan named by the Daurians as dwelling in a fortified town was a Manchu military governor at Kirin, for it was from Kirin Province that Heilungchiang was subdued.

The presence of this first Cossack expedition, numbering nearly one hundred men, in a small Daurian village, caused provisions to run short, and from this moment the first friendly intercourse between the natives and the Russians ceased. From thence on, the story of Cossack adventure on the Amur is full of murder and outrage, and is unpleasant reading. The pangs of hunger forced the leader of this expedition to despatch a lieutenant with some men to forage, and orders were foolishly issued that they were to entice the native chiefs out of their villages and hold them hostage until provisions were forthcoming. This fitly illustrates the Russian lack of intelligence in dealing with new problems. No such stratagem was

required, for in every case the simple native chiefs went of their own accord and greeted the Russians as friends, offering them their services. But the lieutenant, instead of at once realising that the first instructions could be disregarded, followed them to the letter. He brutally seized the chiefs, and as a result of his overbearing conduct provoked the inhabitants to an attack. The Daurians resolutely sallied forth from their village, and after a short fight drove the Russians into the woods, where they were surrounded. Matters then seem to have arrived at a deadlock, for we read that in four days the adventurers were able to escape and that they arrived back in a state of utter collapse. The failure of this foraging expedition entailed great suffering on all the Cossacks, and half of them succumbed before relief came.

The leader, Poyarkof, then continued his journey south without loss of time, and finally reached the mouth of the Dzeya and stood on the banks of the Amur. From here he pushed his way south-east and discovered the Sungari on the opposite bank of the Amur. Another month and a half was spent in voyaging down to the mouth of the Amur, where the whole force that had survived went into winter quarters. Tribute was collected, explorations made in various directions, and finally in 1646, after an absence of three years, Yakutsk was reached again. This voyage was a most noteworthy proceeding, and if it had not been for the low order of intelligence exhibited in situations demanding the exercise of

common sense, the Russian, by his manly energy in the face of terrible sufferings, could have fitly claimed the Amur province as his by right.

Poyarkof reported that in his opinion three hundred men were ample to subjugate the whole of the territories visited by him. Three forts, each with a garrison of fifty men, should be erected in the country of the Daurians—which practically comprises most of the Russian province of the Amur of to-day —and the remaining one hundred and fifty should be kept in hand, in order to enforce Russian authority in case of need. Thus ended the first Russian expedition into the mysterious regions. In the record there stands out that false policy of brutal domination which has been handed down until to-day, and which has slowly but surely alienated sympathy, where sympathy could have easily been won.

In 1648 news was received of a shorter way to the Amur farther to the west and nearer to the trans-Baikal regions. After some preliminary surveys, Kharabof, a wealthy Siberian, proposed to the Voivod or Governor of Yakutsk that he should undertake the subjugation of the newly-discovered territories. As he promised to send all the tribute he could collect to Yakutsk, the Voivod consented and placed some Cossacks at his disposal.

In 1650 Khabarof reached the Amur, but the bad conduct of Poyarkof and his Cossacks had been so noised abroad, even in these thinly-inhabited lands, that the approach of the Russians was the signal for all dwellings to be deserted. These upper Amur

regions were then under the control of a Tunguzian chief, Prince Lavkai, and the inhabitants were far more advanced in civilisation than those on the lower Amur. Khabarof found five forts consisting of wooden walls with turrets for archers, separated a day and a half's journey from one another. The first two were deserted, but as they approached the third, four horsemen commanded by Lavkai himself met them and desired to know their business. When told that they merely came for the sake of trade, he pertinently answered that a Cossack had reported that the Russians were coming to enslave the country. Khabarof replied to this, in the calm Russian fashion, that a small tribute might possibly be required, but that in return the Czar would take all under his powerful protection, and that the debt would be on Lavkai's side. The Daurians discreetly rode away, and Khabarof, after burning the forts as unnecessary, since the Czar had now become the protector, wandered about the country seeing what there was to see. He discovered some pits filled with corn, and then after collecting tribute returned to Yakutsk. It is to be noted that some wheat discovered in the Daurian country was sent to Moscow as a sample of the richness of the Amur regions.

A year later we find Khabarof starting again for the Amur with a largely increased force. In June, 1651, he voyaged down the Amur in a number of large and small barges. Deserted villages were constantly passed, the Daurians having fled on the approach of the Russians. Finally, after some days,

Khabarof came in sight of a triple line of fortifications built by some Daurian princes with a view of checking the Russian progress. The Daurian garrison had been reinforced by fifty Manchu horsemen sent by the Emperor Shun Chih to collect tribute. It was hoped that these would prove formidable champions in the coming conflict. However, after a first discharge of fire-arms which laid low twenty Daurians, the Manchu warriors fled precipitately inland. It is hard to explain this retreat at a time when the Manchu prowess was at its height, unless the use of firearms disconcerted men who were armed with swords and lances. The Daurians then retreated within their fortress, and after some days' fierce fighting the Russians forced their way in and slew without offering quarter. Six hundred and sixty Daurians were killed and nearly four hundred women and children made prisoners. The booty included three hundred and fifty horses and cattle and rich stores of grain. The Russians' loss was but fifty killed and wounded. It is again noteworthy that the historians stigmatise Khabarof's conduct as unwarrantably cruel and short-sighted.

After this battle Khabarof attempted to force the chiefs of the surrounding country to tender their submission, but as his efforts proved unavailing he was induced to continue his journey down the river without diplomatic results. Lower down he surprised another fort and compelled the chiefs and principal inhabitants to swear allegiance to the Czar. Leaving these villages, Khabarof continued his voyage down

stream, and after a further two weeks reached the mouth of the Sungari. Fresh tortures and brutalities were practised by him, and caused the population to flee. Passing the mouth of the Sungari, Khabarof at last came to a large village of Achani—men belonging to the same tribe as those met by Poyarkof—who subsisted largely on fish, and are probably to be identified with the Goldi or Fish-skin Tartars. Here Khabarof built a large fort and wintered—a fort which he named Achanskoi Gorod, and the remains of which were discovered some time ago by the distinguished traveller, Maack. Again the presence of two hundred Russians seems to have proved intolerable to the inhabitants, and accordingly a thousand of them got together and attacked Khabarof, but, of course, without success.

The Amur natives, being convinced of their impotence against the foreign invaders, now directly invoked the assistance of the Manchus by sending word to Uchurva, the Governor of Nadinni (? Kirin) and asking him for help. The latter despatched prompt orders to the Governor of Ninguta to assemble an army, march against the Russians and take them all—if possible, alive. This is the first recorded instance of the Manchu and Muscovite being brought face to face. But as yet the Manchus were too weak to cope with the new danger, for the flower of their armies were at this very moment engaged in subduing China itself, and had no time to turn their attention to the northern frontiers. The Manchu General at Ninguta, however, gathered

about him two thousand horsemen, armed with bows and matchlocks, and at daybreak on the 24th of March, 1652, the Manchu and the Russian met in armed conflict for the first time. The Manchus placed their guns in position near the fort, battered a breach, and rushed forward to the assault. The Russians hurried one of their cannon to the threatened point and opened a heavy fire, which completely repulsed the attack. One hundred and fifty Cossacks then sprang up and delivered a fierce sortie, which left them masters of the field. The extent of their victory may be measured by the fact that they killed nearly seven hundred Manchus, captured eight hundred horses and a number of cannon, matchlocks, and standards, at a cost of but ninety killed and wounded on their own side.

Khabarof seems to have been satisfied with this victory, and tired of the country, for we see him re-ascending the Amur. At the mouth of the Sungari another force of six thousand Manchus and native levies were waiting for him, but he managed to avoid them and hurried on. Higher up the Amur he met Cossack reinforcements from Yakutsk, which brought his force up to 350 men. Considering himself now strong enough to maintain himself on the Amur in the face of any odds, Khabarof was about to build another fort opposite the mouth of the Dzeya when the outbreak of a formidable mutiny among his men put an end to all his plans. A third of his force disappeared, and he urgently sent to Yakutsk for reinforcements. Khabarof con-

sidered that six thousand men would be sufficient to resist forty thousand Manchus, and he embodied his ideas in a strongly-worded communication to the Siberian Governors. There were, however, no such numbers available at the time in Siberia, and the Voivod of Yakutsk therefore sent messengers to Moscow requesting reinforcements, as the question of the conquest of the Amur was already being discussed.

During the nine years of Russian adventure on the Amur nothing had been accomplished, and outrages and extortions of every kind marked the progress of the Cossacks wherever they went. It is on record that ten years after the arrival of the first Russians on the Amur all the cultivated fields had become deserts, all the cattle had disappeared, and the natives were decimated. Ravenstein, in his admirable book, fitly sums up the history of the nine years of private exploration on the Amur with the figures of the killed and lost. Five hundred and thirty-two Russians in all left Siberia for the Amur; of these, 239 were either lost or killed; 230 remained in garrison on the river, 69 returned home; and this insignificant force accounted for 1600 natives and Manchus killed in battle or massacred, the looting of all the cattle and grain to be found in the whole country, and the complete alienation of any sympathy the natives may have had in the first instance.

But the reports of the excesses committed by these Cossack adventurers had finally reached Moscow, and it was resolved to occupy the newly-

discovered territory with an army of 3,000 men. Whilst these forces were slowly on their way to Eastern Siberia, and their chiefs engaged in consulting with the local Governors as to the ways and means to be employed, the Cossack messengers whom Khabarof had sent for succour passed on their way to Moscow, everywhere spreading the most exaggerated and fabulous reports concerning the riches to be found on the Amur. They spoke of the abundance of gold, silver, cattle and sables, and the wonderful future which awaited Russian enterprise. An immense sensation was created among the adventure-loving Siberian population by these accounts, and hundreds hastened to seek their fortunes on the Amur. It is very remarkable that the military occupation of Manchuria two and a half centuries later should have provoked the same stories and filled men's minds with the same desires. Cossacks sent to fetch back these fugitives met with resistance in 1652, and all along the Lena lawless bands plundered villages and devastated fields. For years these disorders continued, and it is recorded that in 1655 two brothers called Zorokin, heading a band of 300 adventurers, plundered all along the road and finally reached the magic Amur only to meet with a miserable death. At last measures were taken to check these lawless proceedings, and, by the building of forts and the institution of a passport system, the Amur was cut off.

The Khabarof settlements on the mighty river were now taken over by Stepanov, another doughty

adventurer, and Khabarof returned to Moscow, where he was presented to the Czar and rewarded. He took with him some representative Daurians and other natives, who were likewise introduced to the Czar's presence, loaded with presents, and sent home.

Meanwhile, Stepanov could not long remain quiet, so he descended the Amur to the mouth of the Sungari. In the spring of 1654 we find him engaged with a hostile flotilla manned by 3,000 Manchus and a number of Daurians and Ducheri. After fierce fighting, in which the Chinese flotilla took to flight, an insufficiency of powder and shot caused Stepanov to retire. But the Manchus, who were now firmly seated on the Dragon Throne, were evidently becoming more and more alarmed at the increasing Russian activity on the Amur, and each year saw them more determined to eject the intruders. Stepanov doubtless realised this, for in the winter we see him building a fort of great strength at the mouth of the river Kamara, which empties itself into the Upper Amur. The Russian garrison of 500 men waited quietly for an attack, and they were not mistaken, for in the spring a Chinese army of 10,000 men with fifteen cannon, numerous matchlocks, and storming apparatus, appeared before the place. Some Russians were surprised beyond the fortifications and made prisoners, and then the Chinese proceeded with the erection of batteries. After a lengthy bombardment the Chinese at last resolved to take the place by assault. Storming parties

advanced from four sides simultaneously, but after some fierce hand-to-hand fighting, the Russians made a sortie and compelled the enemy to retreat. The Chinese, disgusted with their ill-success, finally retired. For a couple of years Stepanov voyaged up and down the Amur, collecting tribute and sometimes losing men by desertion.

In 1658 he met his doom. Descending the Amur, he encountered a fleet of forty-five Manchu boats below the Sungari, well-armed with large and small guns. Stepanov had 500 men with him, but nearly 200 deserted before the battle. Surrounded by the Chinese, he found a heroic resistance of no avail. Out of his entire force all were slain or made prisoners, and he himself was stabbed to death and flung in the river. The deserters drifted about the Amur for some years, and finally either disappeared completely or returned home.

Meanwhile, in the trans-Baikal province of to-day, independent adventure was discovering hitherto unknown land. Yeneseisk Cossacks, in the early fifties of the same century, had discovered the Shilka and collected tribute in furs—the first sign of intended dominion. Bekeolf was the first leader, but, as had been the case on the Amur, he was soon succeeded by another man, Pashkof. Pashkof, after two years of preliminary surveys, set out in 1656 with nearly six hundred Cossacks from Yeneseisk, and after varying fortunes he founded the town of Nerchinsk, destined to become famous through treaty-making. Although Nerchinsk lay

on the banks of the Shilka, Pashkof was made Commander-in-Chief of all the forces on the Amur. Pashkof sent to Stepanov to acquaint him with the fact, and to order reinforcing Cossacks to be sent to Nerchinsk. Stepanov was, however, dead, as we have already seen, and the Middle Amur practically abandoned.

Ten years passed by quietly with the Amur unmolested by Russian adventurers, and with Nerchinsk growing in importance. In 1669 a new era was inaugurated by an exiled Pole named Chernigovsky, who established himself at Albazin, the site of one of the old forts of Lavkai. Chernigovsky, who was a fugitive from justice, had with him eighty-four equally desperate men, and Albazin was destined to have a unique history. The first thing the fugitives did was to build a fort with towers and dig a big ditch round the whole. Beyond the walls, fields were laid out, ploughed, sown, and everything made ready for a permanent stay. The reappearance of the Russians on the Middle Amur immediately attracted the attention of the Chinese, and in 1670 a letter arrived at Nerchinsk, the nominal seat of government for all these regions, complaining of the encroachments of the Cossacks at Albazin. As a reply to this a Russian envoy was sent to Peking, where he was well received by the Emperor Kang-Hsi, who had succeeded Shun Chih, whilst the question of Albazin was apparently left in abeyance. In 1671, the curious fact is recorded that the Governor of Nerchinsk sent a

man called Okolkof to assume chief command at Albazin, thereby implying that the Siberian authorities were indifferent as to who opened the door to the Amur, so long as that result was accomplished. This semi-recognition of Albazin's status caused more fugitives to arrive, and the piety of the Russian was evinced by the building of a monastery and a church at the convict settlement, whilst a cathedral and another chapel were projected but never constructed. Albazin was now growing rapidly, and half-a-dozen thriving peasant villages surrounded the fort. Chernigovsky, the original founder of Albazin, and his companions in arms were now graciously pardoned ; Tunguzians in the neighbourhood of Albazin were made subject to the authority of the Cossack settlement, and parties of other Cossacks ascended the Amur and built permanent settlements in a number of places. By the year 1683, the northern tributaries of the Amur had all been reoccupied, and Albazin had nearly three thousand acres of land under cultivation. Near Aigun, then a native Tunguzian town, the Russians founded a settlement to carry on trade with the Chinese. This is near Blagoveschensk of to-day.

The Chinese were now seriously alarmed with these developments, and as the northernmost province of Manchuria, Heilungchiang, had, by 1671, been completely brought under the Manchu rule, they threw a large force into Aigun and fortified an island of the Amur preparatory to undertaking military operations on a large scale. The first success

was with a party of Cossacks on their way down river from Albazin. These were enticed into the Chinese camps and made prisoners. The Chinese then ascended the Dzeya, burnt all the settlements and made prisoners of all those who were unable to escape. Acting in this fashion, by the end of 1683 they destroyed the whole of the Russian settlements on the lower Amur and its tributaries, and Albazin alone remained.

In 1684 two Russian prisoners arrived from Peking with a letter to the Governor of Albazin in which promises and threats were freely used in an endeavour to force the garrison to surrender. The town stood firm, however, and ignored the Chinese overtures; a new Governor arrived, and Albazin, at the height of its prosperity and on the eve of its fall, received a coat of arms from the Czar, representing a spread-eagle holding a bow and arrow in its claws—a suggestive device in the light of recent history.

Early in 1685 the Manchus advanced on Albazin. The Russians on their approach evacuated all the neighbouring villages and burnt down all dwellings standing outside the fort. The garrison, including all able-bodied men, numbered only three hundred and fifty, but large reinforcements were very shortly expected. The Chinese army arrived in one hundred large boats and totalled over eighteen thousand, including other forces which came by land. Their arms consisted of bows and sabres, fifteen cannon, and numerous matchlocks. After some seizure of

cattle and preliminary skirmishing, the Chinese general sent in a demand for surrender written in Manchu, Polish, and Russian, and promising great leniency should his request be acceded to. No attention was paid to this summons, however, and the Chinese bombardment commenced forthwith. In a few days the Russians had lost over a hundred men, and their priests, crucifix in hand, were reduced to encouraging the Cossacks by word and deed. As the wooden walls and towers of the fort had almost been battered down and ammunition was beginning to fail, the leading inhabitants petitioned the Governor to make terms with the Chinese for a free retreat to Nerchinsk. The Governor was forced to accede to their wishes, and as a result the garrison was permitted to leave with their baggage and arms.

Hardly a day's journey above Albazin the long expected reinforcements were met ; had they arrived but twenty-four hours sooner Albazin might never have fallen, and the history of the Amur might have been completely changed. The Chinese did not molest the retreating Russians, but followed them closely as far as the river Argun to see that they strictly carried out their contract. Being satisfied that this was done, the Manchu commanders ordered their forces to retire down the Amur ; Old Aigun, which was then on the left bank of the river, was abandoned by the Chinese and New Aigun on the right bank (the Chinese bank of to-day) constructed. Leaving a garrison here of two thousand men, the bulk of the Chinese withdrew up the Sungari.

It is interesting to see how quickly the Russians were back in Albazin. Five days after the arrival of the Albazin garrison at Nerchinsk, seventy men returned to reconnoitre. Finding that the Chinese had retired they joyfully brought back the news to Nerchinsk, and within a few weeks detachment after detachment of Cossacks poured into the deserted settlements, finally raising the numbers to close on a thousand men. The crops which were still standing, having been left unharmed by the Chinese, were gathered in, a new and stronger fort was built, and by the spring of the next year a twenty foot mud wall, nearly thirty feet thick at the base, protected the adventurers against all attacks.

Hostile parties of Chinese now began to arrive and lurk around the settlers. Being desirous of knowing what were the proposed Chinese movements, an expedition of three hundred mounted Cossacks was despatched from Albazin, and rode into the heart of Heilungchiang province. After a week's journey a troop of forty Manchu horsemen were seen in the direction of Tsitsihar and a hot chase and skirmish resulted in thirty Manchus being killed and one taken prisoner. From the prisoner it was learnt that the Chinese had been apprised of the rebuilding of Albazin and that at that very moment a Manchu army was marching on the place.

The reconnaissance at once returned to Albazin and the garrison prepared for battle. The Chinese forces advanced by land and water and three hundred Manchu horsemen coming along the left bank

of the Amur surprised and killed a number of Albazinians on the fields. The fort was soon surrounded, the fields laid waste, and the crops destroyed. After a prolonged bombardment the Chinese rushed to the assault but were beaten back with great slaughter. Five fierce Russian sorties accounted for a good many Chinese killed and wounded, and the Manchu commanders could get no nearer to their goal in spite of every effort. Scurvy, was, however, at work, and so after a three months siege the garrison was reduced to one hundred and fifteen men. In spite of this all Chinese offers were rejected, and urgent messages were sent to Nerchinsk.

At the end diplomacy made itself felt. The Chinese received orders from Peking to retire three miles from the fort and cease their attacks. This gave the Albazinians breathing time. Four months later the Chinese withdrew another mile, and during this truce the besieged were at liberty to leave the fort, buy provisions, and even admit reinforcements. Such is the droll manner in which Chinese warfare is conducted. On the 30th August, 1687, the Chinese left Albazin altogether and returned to Aigun and Tsitsihar. The Russians promptly rebuilt their villages and cultivated their fields anew.

The reason for this strange conduct is found by turning to the march of events elsewhere. The ever-increasing complications with the Chinese had made it appear desirable at Moscow—before the events which have been chronicled above took place—to arrange definitely the frontiers of the two Empires.

It cannot be doubted that, as both the Czar of Muscovy and the Manchu Emperor of China were still consolidating their Empires, the disputed land did not belong to either, nor could either Emperor lay claim, except by nominal right of conquest, to vast tracts of barren lands, inhabited only by semi-nomad Tunguzians. The great value of these regions at that time was the sable hunt—for the tribute collected by the suzerain power was mainly payable in valuable sables. The negotiations resulting in the Treaty of Nerchinsk are of great interest to-day, for they show that over two centuries ago a state of affairs had arisen almost exactly similar to that of to-day in Manchuria.

The first step towards a settlement was taken by the Muscovite Government by despatching the Chancellor Venukof from Moscow to Peking. Venukof arrived in Peking whilst the siege of Albazin was proceeding, and through his efforts the Manchu Emperor was induced to send a few Mandarins to stay the siege. This, as has already been stated, took place in November, 1686. The letter written by the Emperor Kang Hsi—almost the greatest Manchu Emperor in history—to the Czar of Muscovy is so important as showing the Chinese manner of thinking at the time in regard to the Russian encroachments on the Amur provinces that it is well worth reproducing. Dated November 1686, it runs as follows:—

"The officials to whom I have intrusted the supervision of the sable hunt, have frequently complained of the injury

which the people of Siberia do to our hunters on the Amur and particularly to the Ducheri. My subjects have never provoked yours nor done them any injury; yet the people of Albazin, armed with cannons, guns and other firearms, have frequently attacked my people who have no firearms and were peaceably hunting. Moreover, they have given shelter to our deserters, and when my Superintendent of the Chase followed some deserters of Kandagan to Albazin and demanded their surrender, Alexei, Ivan, and others responded that they could not do this but must first apply to the Changa Khan for instructions. As yet no answer has been vouchsafed to our inquiries nor have the deserters been given up.

"In the meantime my officers on the frontier have informed me of your Russians having carried off some peaceful hunters as prisoners. They also roved about the Lower Amur and injured the small town of Genquen and other places. As soon as I heard of this, I ordered my officers to take up arms and act as occasion might require. They accordingly made prisoners of the Russians roving about the Lower Amur. No one was put to death but all were provided with food. When our people arrived before Albazin and called upon it to surrender, Alexei and others, without deigning reply, treated us in a hostile fashion and fired off cannon and muskets. We therefore took possession of Albazin by force, but even then we did not put anyone to death. We liberated our prisoners; but more than forty Russians of their own free choice preferred remaining amongst our own people. The others we exhorted earnestly to return to their own side of their frontier where they might hunt at pleasure. My officers had scarcely left when four hundred and sixty Russians returned, rebuilt Albazin, killed our hunters and laid waste their fields, thus compelling my officers to have recourse to arms again.

"Albazin was consequently beleaguered a second time, but orders were nevertheless given to spare the prisoners and restore them to their own country. Since then Venukof and others have arrived in Peking to announce the approach of an ambassador and to propose a friendly

conference to settle the boundary question and induce the Chinese to raise the siege of Albazin. On this a courier was at once sent to Albazin to put a stop to further hostilities."

This letter throws considerable light on the Manchu pretensions of that time. For, be it noted that the first Manchu seated on the throne of China was Shun Chih in 1644, and when the famous Jesuit, Martini, left Peking in 1651, that is, seven years after the occupation of the northern capital, only twelve out of the eighteen provinces of China had been conquered by the Manchus, and the last of the Mings who established a kingdom in the south-west of China was not finally expelled until 1658. It was Khabarof who first saw any trace of Manchus in the Amur regions, for we read that in 1651, fifty Manchu horsemen, sent by the Emperor Shun Chih to collect tribute in furs, attempted to prevent the landing of Cossacks on the right bank of the Amur in concert with the native Daurians, but on the first discharge of firearms fled. Had the first Russian expeditions been armed with proper Government sanction, there is no doubt that they could have with justice laid claim to the north bank of the Amur. As it was, being mere adventurers and marauders, their brutal acts speedily inclined the native Tunguzians towards the newly-established Manchu rule, and destroyed any chances they may have possessed at the beginning.

Immediately on the receipt of Kang Hsi's letter the Czar despatched an Envoy Extraordinary, one

Golovin, to arrange matters. Golovin, accompanied by a number of troops, took two years to reach the trans-Baikal regions, and seems to have been in every way a fit ancestor to the long line of procrastinators that Russia has always employed in the Far East. Whilst Golovin's secretaries were absent arranging a meeting-place for the proposed conference, Golovin was attacked by an army of fifteen thousand Mongols, apparently acting independently, and not under instructions from Peking. But with a few hundred men he was able to beat back this attack, and as a result fifty thousand Buriat Mongol families acknowledged themselves Russian subjects. Selenginsk, in the middle of the Buriat country, appears to have been first chosen as the seat for the conference. But the Chinese embassy on its way from Peking had its progress endangered by Mongol tribal warfare, and consequently returned to the frontiers. After more parleying, Nerchinsk was finally settled on, and in June, 1689, an enormous Chinese embassy left Peking. A month later they arrived at Nerchinsk, and the momentous character of their mission may be gauged from the fact that there were nine thousand Chinese in the embassy, including officials, servants, soldiers, camp-followers, and others. To transport this vast force, four thousand camels and fifteen thousand horses were used, whilst many of the soldiers sailed up the Amur in large barges, and only met the Chinese ambassadors on the banks of the Shilka opposite Nerchinsk. The Chinese

camps were gay with many-coloured banners and striped tents, and such was the Manchu prestige at this time that the Governor of Nerchinsk trembled at the sight of so many yellow men.

Meanwhile Golovin, the Czar's plenipotentiary, had not arrived, and, in spite of the manifest Chinese irritation and their urgent messages, it was nearly a month and a half before he put in an appearance. Ravenstein ingenuously remarks: "The nonchalance of this gentleman, on embarrassing questions being put to him, surprised even the Chinese and their Jesuit interpreters!" This Russian attitude has been singularly well preserved with the march of centuries.

The proceedings were opened with great ceremony, and with that scrupulous regard for the protocol which the Chinese so love. A great tent was pitched exactly midway between the fortress and the river, and exactly one-half appropriated to the Russians, and the other to the Chinese. The Russians, having due regard for the fact that a good appearance counts for much, had their half of the tent covered with a handsome Turkey carpet, and on their desks and writing-tables were costly clocks and other articles of *vertu*. The Chinese side was devoid of all ornaments, and the chiefs of the embassy, seven in number, sat upon a cushioned bench. Behind them stood military mandarins, and in front of them the Jesuit priests, Fathers Gerbillon and Pereyra, who had accompanied the mission in the capacity of interpreters. Seven hundred and

sixty Chinese soldiers crossed the river, five hundred being halted on the banks, and two hundred and sixty advanced exactly half-way to the tent. Similarly, five hundred Russians were drawn up close to the fort, and two hundred and sixty halted half-way to the all-important tent.

The conference opened with some questions of etiquette. These settled, Golovin in his most nonchalant manner proposed the Amur as the future boundary between the two Empires. The Chinese objected to this on account of the fine sables paid as tribute by the tribes north of the river, and they suggested that the Russians should surrender Albazin, Nerchinsk, and Seleginsk. Golovin refused, and the conference broke up angrily. In the second meeting the Chinese proposed that Nerchinsk should be retained as a trading post by the Russians. This proposal was promptly rejected, and the Chinese left the tent in high dudgeon. The Jesuits now did all in their power to bring about a reconciliation, but, as the Russians still refused to cede Albazin, matters began to look threatening. The Chinese called a grand secret council, and resolved to surround Nerchinsk, to incite the neighbouring Tartars to revolt, and send men down the river to seize Albazin. The Russians likewise prepared for battle, but at the last moment their uncompromising attitude broke down, and they sent an interpreter to ask for a renewal of negotiations, a request to which the Chinese gladly assented.

It was now Father Gerbillon—a French Jesuit—

who was invested with plenary powers and despatched to Golovin. In a few days he had drawn up a draft Treaty, and on the 29th of August the ratifications were exchanged in a tent specially pitched for that purpose. The Chinese plenipotentiaries appeared in state—the Treaty was signed, sealed, and oaths taken for its maintenance. The philosophic Chinese even declared their willingness to swear on the crucifix as the Russians had done, but even easy-mannered Golovin was surprised at this and remarked that such a course could be dispensed with. Copies in Manchu and Russian were exchanged, the plenipotentiaries embraced one another, a splendid feast was served, and the curtain thus rung down on Russo-Chinese strife for a century and a half.

The preamble to the Treaty sets forth the Chinese case in clear language. It runs as follows:

"In order to suppress the insolence of certain rascals who cross the frontier to hunt, plunder, and kill, and who give rise to much trouble and disturbance; to determine clearly and distinctly the boundaries between the two Empires of China and Muscovy: and, lastly, to establish peace and good understanding in the future; the following articles are mutually agreed upon:"

Then follow six articles too uninteresting to be inserted in full. The whole of the first article, which fixes the boundary in very lengthy form, may be conveniently compressed into a few words. The western boundary to be the river Argun; the northern frontier to begin at the river Gorbitza and

to run irregularly to the sea of Okhotsk, so that all the southern slopes of the Stanovoi Mountains with the rivers flowing from them towards the Amur should belong to China, and all the northern slopes with the rivers flowing north should belong to Russia ; and, finally, all Russian towns to the south of Argun to be removed to the northern bank of the river. The second article decrees the destruction of Albazin, the prohibition of hunting across the frontiers, and the immediate reporting to the competent authorities of the crossing of frontiers by armed bands. Article three buries everything that has gone before in the eternal oblivion of diplomatists. Article four decrees that fugitives crossing the frontier shall be arrested and handed over to the nearest authority. And, finally, articles five and six make free intercourse between the two Empires permissible, subject to certain passport regulations.

The Chinese had thus won all along the line and were jubilant. Boundary stones were erected at the frontier points. Albazin was abandoned and the Russians excluded from navigating the Amur. Excepting that they certainly looked with envious eyes on the sable hunt, there is no doubt that the Chinese were really indifferent about the trans-Amur and the fate of the Tunguzian tribes inhabiting these dreary wastes. But they fully realised that to make the Amur the boundary would be to leave the whole vexed question open and merely to pave the way to future complications.

The Chinese indifference is proved by the fact that the boundary stones were placed far south of the supposed limits and that they willingly surrendered a territory twenty three thousand miles square. Even on the north-west frontier the same indifference was to be observed, for it was discovered later on that there were two Gorbitzas and that the Chinese did not know to which one the Treaty referred. The periodical visiting of boundary stones was carried out methodically when it could be done by boat, that is, on the Argun and the Gorbitza, but the northern land frontier seems to have been largely neglected. So long as the Chinese barges which ascended the Amur met with no Cossack free-lances, the Manchu officials did not trouble to journey several hundred miles inland to the northern boundaries.

For a long time there is nothing to note in the Manchurian territories. Although a few Russian scientists and some escaped convicts found their way to the Amur, the Siberian Government on the whole may be said to have carried out the frontier regulations with great rigour and to have discouraged all attempts at breaking through the barrier of exclusion which the Chinese Government had insisted on erecting. But before leaving the interesting subject of the wars between the two Empires which resulted in the Nerchinsk instrument, there is a curious piece of little-known history to be told.

The Chinese in their several decades of warfare

with the Russians had taken many Russian prisoners, and these numbers had been swelled by numerous Cossack deserters who were not enchanted with the rigours of life on the Amur. These were gradually all sent to Peking and formed into a company attached to the Imperial Bodyguard of the Manchu monarch. When peace was signed, a church was built for them in Peking, and as they expressed themselves well satisfied with their treatment, Russia was quite willing that they should remain where they were. Later on, when Russian caravans began to arrive in Peking over the Mongolian land route, several priests were sent from Moscow, and at the so-called Russia House a beginning was made of the politico-religious Russian Mission which exists to this day in the Manchu capital. Religious ministrations were provided to the exiles when they wanted it, from Russia House, but the majority of the ancient Albazinians—for most of them were prisoners from Albazin—soon succumbed to their surroundings and degenerated into ordinary Manchus with Manchu wives. By 1824 the descendants of these prisoners had become merged in the Manchu soldiery, and there were only twenty-three who had even been baptised. As a separate organisation they have ceased to exist.

Turning now to the northern provinces of Manchuria, Heilungchiang and Kirin, there is not much to note for many years. Up to the twenties of the nineteenth century, these two vast provinces, probably five hundred thousand miles square in

extent, had soldiery alone for settled population. The nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes were on the decline, and seem to have been very insignificant in numbers. Many of the able-bodied natives were enlisted in the Manchurian militia and given free grants of land. The north bank of the Amur and the country right up to the Stanovoi Mountains were rarely visited by the Manchu officials, and only officials in charge of the sable hunt dared to wander about in this desolate country. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the island of Saghalien appears to have become tributary to China, but the indigenous tribes were not disturbed.

Until the nineteenth century this policy of exclusion and the restriction regarding immigration into the two northern provinces were maintained unbroken, but a change was soon to come. The Manchus, after having eaten for a century and a half from the flesh-pots of China, had changed from a race of hardy horsemen and resolute warriors into a ceremonious and privileged caste—to all intents and purposes exactly similar to the Chinese. When they had descended on the eighteen provinces at the head of ever-victorious armies they had laughed at the indolent Chinese mandarins riding about in chairs, and had called them women, had scorned ceremonies and etiquette and the whole Chinese system. But, scoffers though they were in the beginning, they soon ended by being enslaved, just as all conquerors from the north had been before

them. Already at the beginning of the eighteenth century they had become effete ; by the nineteenth, tradition and early prestige were their only claims for superiority, and China had assimilated them completely.

During the twenties of the nineteenth century the empty condition of the Imperial Treasury caused the Emperor Tao Kuang to inaugurate a new policy in Manchuria. The public lands of the northern provinces were put up to sale, the Chinese emigrated *en masse*, especially to Kirin province, and in a few decades the Manchuria of olden days had ceased to exist. Many of the immigrants were Mahommedans from the back provinces of China, and mosques are to-day to be found in far-off places in Manchuria, such as Sansing. The presence of these Chinese in such large numbers soon caused the few remaining tribes in all excepting the most remote corners to yield to the newcomers in dress, language, and customs, so that to-day Manchuria is to all intents and purposes exactly similar to the other northern provinces of China proper.

And now we come to the second Russian attempt, after a lapse of nearly two centuries, to reach the Amur—an attempt made successful through the genius of Muravief.

The Russian settlements on the extreme northern shores of the Pacific, founded and gradually developed with great difficulties, had to be provisioned by pack-animal transport from Eastern Siberia—a very slow and costly method. All

through the eighteenth century, the desirability of securing the right to navigate the Amur had been again and again mooted by successive Siberian Governors, but each time their proposals had fallen through, owing to the lack of support from the home Government. It was not until Count Nikolas Muravief became Governor of Eastern Siberia in 1847 that any real progress was made. One of Muravief's first acts was to send an officer, accompanied by four Cossacks, down the Amur to explore the country and to report on the general conditions. Then Muravief gave orders to explore the coasts of the sea of Okhotsk to the mouth of the Amur. As a result of this order, a number of winter stations and posts, destined to develop into places of some importance, were established on Saghalien and other convenient points.

It was not until 1854 that anything really remarkable occurred. In that year, General Muravief himself descended the Amur from the trans-Baikal province with a large force, and inaugurated a policy that has had the most far-reaching results. It was due to the Crimean war that Muravief finally obtained the consent of his Government to the taking of this momentous step, for the outbreak of hostilities in Europe left the Russian Pacific fleet (which had been gradually collected on the coast after Muravief's surveys began) without supplies, owing to the vigilance of English cruisers. Without waiting for Chinese permission, Muravief sailed down the Amur in a small steamer accompanied by

fifty barges and rafts loaded with a thousand infantrymen and Cossacks and armed with several guns. On reaching Aigun, Muravief landed and interviewed the Chinese Governor. A tent had been pitched and the entire Chinese garrison of this once important Manchu post drawn up to impress the trespassers. The miserable appearance of this so-called Manchu soldiery, and the absurdity of their arms, showed that the Chinese on the Amur had retrograded rather than advanced during the two centuries which had elapsed since the days of the early Cossack marauders. After a brief interview, Muravief continued his journey down the river, and at the end of June, hardly a month's journey from the starting-place, the expedition arrived without incident at Mariinsk, a newly-founded settlement on the lower Amur.

The provisioning of the fleet, and sundry other details, call for no remark. With the outbreak of the Crimean war, the entire strength of Russia was concentrated at Petropavlovsk, in Kamschatka, and the Anglo-French attack anxiously awaited. The French and English fleets mustered their forces on the American coast, and on the 28th of August, 1854, an allied squadron of six vessels arrived off Petropavlovsk. After a bombardment an assault was ordered. A mixed force of seven hundred English and French sailors rushed to the attack, but were beaten back in great confusion by the land batteries. After this repulse the Allies retreated, and although a second attempt was imperatively

ordered to be made, the abandonment of this strong place by the Russians made it unnecessary.

Meanwhile, completely ignoring the Chinese, the Russians continued to display the greatest activity on the Amur. In 1855 three more expeditions sailed down the coveted river from the trans-Baikal province, with three thousand soldiers, five hundred colonists, and herds of cattle and horses. In that year the operations of the Allies on the Pacific were on a much more extended scale, but the results were equally unimportant. Although seventeen vessels were employed by the combined forces, and were further reinforced by an independent squadron from Hong Kong, no successes took place, except for a few insignificant captures of Russian sailing vessels, and the destruction of stores at some of the settlements on the coast. It is said with some plausibility, that the failure of the Anglo-French allies to harm Russian expansion on the Pacific convinced St. Petersburg's statesmen that Russia's destiny as a sea-power could only be fulfilled off the coasts of the Asiatic Continent. The affair at Petropavlovsk was looked upon as proof certain that Russia was really fated to succeed in the Far East, and that the very distance of these coasts from the beaten track made them secure. General Muravief now proceeded in person to St. Petersburg to advocate the inauguration of a great forward movement, which would not only secure the right to navigate the Amur, but also to colonise the extensive regions

which were practically open to the first comers. Whilst he was absent, the able lieutenants whom he had left in charge sailed ever-increasing numbers of barges and rafts down the river with supplies and men for the settlements which were springing up on the lower Amur and on the coast. In this fashion did Russia push forward.

In 1857 Muravief returned, armed with the fullest authority to act as he might wish. Accordingly, during the month of June of that year, three thousand infantrymen and cavalry were sent down the Amur, and for the first time posts were openly established along the left bank of the middle and upper Amur. During 1857 a fruitless effort was made by Admiral Putiatin, who sailed from the Pacific settlements through the Sea of Japan to the Gulf of Pechili, to force the Chinese to recognise the Russians on the Amur. It was reported at the time that Russia was, in addition, demanding the cession of the whole of Manchuria, including the provinces down to the Gulf of Liao-tung, although both sides, for different motives, took steps to deny promptly that such was the case.

As a result of this failure of Putiatin's to induce the Chinese to recognise in any way the Russian right to the territories which they were opening up, and because the Chinese officials along the Amur were rapidly assuming a hostile attitude, Muravief once more hastened to St. Petersburg, explained all, and asked for heavy reinforcements and money. Admiral Putiatin was ordered to co-operate with

the British and French in China (then engaged in the war which was to break down Manchu conservatism and open the gates of Peking to the Foreign Legations), and large bodies of Siberian troops were moved towards the Amur.

In 1858 the operations of the Anglo-French expeditions against the Chinese forces made themselves felt on the Amur. The attitude of the Chinese authorities underwent a sudden change, and Muravief found them perfectly willing to conclude a treaty. In May, 1858, he was thus able to sign the Treaty of Aigun, in which China ceded to Russia the left bank of the Amur to the Ussuri, and both banks below the Ussuri. Hardly a month afterwards Putiatin signed the Russian Treaty of Tientsin, the conditions of which were similar to those contained in the Instruments signed by the other powers, and are mainly of a commercial nature.

But, although the door to the Amur was now ajar, it was not really open for all time, since the acts of the Chinese frontier authorities, who signed the Aigun Treaty, could be repudiated by the Central Government. Foreseeing this, Muravief proceeded promptly to work and founded towns along the newly-acquired river bank. Blagoveschensk, or the town of "good tidings," was the first to be planned by him; and Khabarovsk was founded soon afterwards on the mouth of the Ussuri. In August, 1858, Muravief was fitly rewarded for his great services to Russia by being created Count of

the Amur, and henceforth he was known as Muravief Amurski. In December of the same year a Ukase was published by which the new territories received a special organisation, and the maritime province and the Amur province were organised as separate governments. At the beginning of 1859 Russia had nearly eight thousand troops in these two provinces, a wonderful advance considering the difficulties which nature has imposed on all development in these cold latitudes. In spite of this, however, Russia was in some danger of losing all she had won, for the Allies had meanwhile suffered the famous repulse at the Taku Forts, and been forced temporarily to retreat. China promptly gave it to be understood that the Aigun Treaty would not be carried out, and matters looked very critical for Russia. Muravief, who was absent on leave of absence, once more came back post haste to the Amur, and prepared against a Chinese attack. In 1860, however, other events made this unnecessary. The Anglo-French expedition had entered Peking, and General Ignatief, who was lucky enough to be the first plenipotentiary to enter into close communication with Prince Kung, whom the Court had left in sole charge of Imperial affairs, succeeded in concluding the great Treaty of November, 1860, which demarcated the Manchurian frontiers anew to Russia's lasting advantage. Seeing that these frontiers nominally remain the same to this day, it is not out of place to give them in detail.

It was decided that the western frontier of

Manchuria should be formed by the river Argun to its junction with the Shilka. From thence the boundary followed the course of the Amur in an imaginary line drawn down the centre of the river, so that the right bank remained Chinese territory and the left bank was ceded to Russia. Where the Ussuri enters the Amur, Russia also acquired the right to all the territory lying to the east of it, and the frontier line running down the bed of the river ascends the river Singachi and enters Lake Hinka. From Hinka it is continued in an irregular fashion down to the Pacific coast, meeting the northern Korean coast near the mouth of the Tiumen river. In this fashion China completely lost access to the Sea of Japan, and surrendered what is to-day the important province of the Primorsk to the northern power. The nearest point on Chinese territory to the coast in this extreme east is Chinese Hun-ch'un, which stands some thirty miles inland from Passiet Bay.

The importance of this Treaty can hardly be over-estimated. Russia had acquired an open and legal right to territory on the Amur which she had long coveted, and in addition she had the whole of Eastern or maritime Manchuria, giving her access to seas far more temperate and sheltered than those of Okhotsk and the neighbouring waters. Ravenstein, forty years ago, pointed out that the whole of Manchuria, surrounded on more than half its land frontiers by Russia, was in a highly precarious position ; and predicted that when China tumbled to pieces Russia

would without a word march down to the Gulf of Liao-tung. Possibly it is because English statesmen have considered this inevitable, that they have so consistently ignored the whole vast and important Manchurian question and watched the Russian advance with indifference.

From the sixties onwards, everything possible was done by the Siberian Governors to promote colonisation and commerce in the newly-acquired territories. The Amur speedily assumed great importance as a great highway. Companies were formed to place steamers on the river at a time when steam was but slowly driving the sails from their supremacy, and from the days of Muravief something of that modern and forward spirit was to be observed which characterises the Amur and Pacific provinces to-day, and differentiates them so much from those of European Russia. But from the first the same unfortunate results in commercial enterprise greeted the efforts of men who appear, either from training or natural lack of ability, quite incapable of conducting sound business operations. Cossack settlements were established from the Shilka to the Ussuri at regular intervals along the left bank of the Amur, and the Ussuri districts, which had been early pronounced most suitable for Cossack colonisation, with their cattle and horse-breeding propensities, were rapidly settled. Great efforts were also made to make the new territories self-supporting in corn—the one priceless treasure of the Amur—but this object was never attained. Although the Amur was

frozen during at least five months of the year, communication in winter was almost quicker than in summer. The Cossacks of the riverine settlements were charged with making and keeping clear a moderately smooth road over the frozen Amur, and with staking out the way with stout posts at regular intervals. In this way it was possible for three-horsed sledges to travel from two hundred and forty to three hundred miles every twenty-four hours, and to maintain rapid communication between all points. In the lower Amur regions the reindeer Tunguzians and their fleet animals required no assistance.

Meanwhile, Manchuria itself had been undergoing great changes. The great influx of settlers during the reign of the Emperor Tao Kuang has already been noted; but although this was the only time that the Chinese authorities openly invited immigration, the first great wave of settlers entering the country in the twenties of the nineteenth century was soon to be eclipsed. The great famine in Shansi drove hundreds of thousands to lands where men were badly needed, and the opening of Newchwang in the sixties made rapid communication with other parts of China possible and attracted adventurous spirits. In 1844 the wave of Chinese civilisation in Kirin province had only reached Sansing on the lower Sungari; in 1859, or only fifteen years afterwards, populous villages extended another fifty miles higher up, and every year saw countless new arrivals. The province of Heilungchiang, a vast country in itself capable of supporting tens of millions of people, was

still practically uninhabited, except for a few thousands of Bannermen and roving Mongols. Chinese agriculturists, attracted by the richness of the virgin soil, began to encroach on the rich plains adjoining Kirin province, and year by year saw more soil broken. As soon as the Taipings had been crushed in Central China, the military reorganisation of the Manchurian province was commenced. And this brings us to a very important and little noticed point.

In spite of their successes whenever the clash of arms brought them into open conflict in anything like equal numbers with the Chinese, the Russians have always feared the Yellow Race. The huge numbers of men that China has at her disposal, and the vastness of her territories, have always impressed the Russian imagination—an imagination that is more easily impressed than any other in the world—and the origin of the idea of the Yellow Peril is to be found in Russian writings. Although the decay into which the Manchu military organisation had fallen, since the days of the early conquerors, was perfectly understood in Russia, the fear that some great irritation would galvanise into life the dormant possibilities of yellow hordes always remained. The preparations to place their forces on a better footing, which the Chinese began during the seventies in Manchuria, were viewed with the greatest concern from Irkutsk to the mouth of the Amur. For, although the Sungari, running through the heart of Manchuria, was nominally opened to

Russian merchants and travellers by the Aigun Treaty of 1858, practically no one dared to avail himself of this privilege and venture into the midst of the Chinaman's country. It was the Chinese commercial spirit, unconquerable and willing to brave all difficulties to secure a profit, which opened up intimate relations in trade with the Russians on the Amur, and put an end to century-old exclusion. The Sansing-Sungari line of villages, finding a ready market for their wheat, vegetables, and other food-stuffs, began sending down junks laden with farm produce to Khabarovsk and elsewhere. The demand ever exceeding the supply, this commerce went on increasing from year to year, until the Russian provinces of the Amur and the Primorsk, with populations largely confined to the towns, have become to a large extent dependent on Manchuria for their food.

But, in spite of this commerce, Manchuria continued to remain much of a *terra incognita* to the Russians, even after they had acquired a frontier along which were posted hosts of military villages at regular intervals, separated only by the waters of the Argun, the Amur, and the Ussuri from their Chinese neighbours. In the main the Russian settlements, with their soldier populations, had nothing in common with the Chinese, who, prompted by their officials and the ancient animosity, resented with the utmost cruelty and rigour any trespassing across the boundary line. The drilling and re-arming of Manchurian troops proceeded apace during

the eighties, and when Port Arthur became a formidable Chinese strong-place by the building of modern forts and the mounting of heavy Krupp guns, when arsenals were established at Kirin and Moukden, and the frontier garrisons at Sansing, Hungchun, and Aigun were reinforced, Manchuria became, from the Russian point of view, a most formidable neighbour. The Cossacks, straining their eyes across the frontiers of slowly-flowing rivers, wondered what was in the vast and fertile country which they knew to be behind, eagerly questioned all travellers, and showed that child-like Russian timidity in the face of the unknown. Broadly speaking, however, there is not much to be chronicled in Manchuria between the sixties and the Japanese war of 1894; but two points of some small interest can be referred to without great digression.

The stories of the fabulous wealth in gold and silver to be found in Manchuria, which Russian credulity constantly circulated in the Amur province, and which were apparently substantiated by the secret traffic in gold carried on across the river by illicit Chinese gold-diggers, led to a curious enterprise—the founding of the so-called Republic of Sholtoga. A few dozen miles higher up the Amur than the ancient settlements of Albazin, but on the Chinese side of the river, gold was discovered in a secluded river valley. Adventurers, of whom there is never any lack in Siberia, were soon attracted to this spot, and there, safe from all interference, gold-washing was commenced on a very extensive scale.

In time, these gold-washers grew in numbers to such an extent that they organised themselves into a "republic" and elected a president. The Chinese soon heard of this encroachment, but appear to have paid but little attention to it in the first instance. Meanwhile, Chinese convicts and others made their way to this new El Dorado and engaged themselves at fabulous prices as labourers and miners. The republic grew, the citizens became rich, and it seemed as if a miniature commonwealth was to be allowed to spring up in the deserts of northern Heilungchiang. But, in consequence of difficulties with the Russian authorities, the Chinese mandarinate was invited to exterminate the unauthorised colony, which numbered, in its halcyon days, three thousand white men and twice as many Chinese. The extermination seems to have been partial in the first instance, and it was not until the Chinese directors of the semi-official mining camp at Moho —adjacent to the republic—found their own men deserting in large numbers that they really set seriously to work. The Russians at Sholtoga were discreetly given time to escape so that no questions should be raised afterwards, but the Chinese were mercilessly butchered to the last man. An interesting photograph is extant, showing the frozen bodies of the victims lying on the ground literally in hundreds. In this manner Sholtoga disappeared for the last time in 1889.

In the same year another little-known event occurred, which, it is believed, threw many of the

most influential Manchu and Chinese officials in Peking together for the first time. At that period there was no telegraph communication between China and Europe; for the Siberian system, passing along the left bank of the Amur, did not connect with the Manchurian lines across the river. The cable companies, having a complete monopoly of China business, were able to charge the most exorbitant rates for the transmission of messages between Europe and the Far East, and this led to the formation of an English syndicate in Shanghai which proposed to perform a droll office. The Manchurian land-system was being extended from Tsitsihar to Aigun so that the Chinese frontier-Commandant might be in direct communication with Peking. On the opposite banks of the Amur the Siberian land-line passed west on its way to Europe, and therefore, if this trifling gap could be bridged over, an all-overland route would be available, and messages transmissible at a rate amounting to the Chinese and Russian domestic rates combined. The Desmond Telegraph Company, whose system was to be but a few hundred yards of wire rope and a dozen wooden message-boxes, was duly organised. An arrangement was soon arrived at with the Chinese Telegraph authorities, who undertook to transmit messages for the usual rates from Shanghai to Aigun (Helampo): the European firms in the Far East all agreed to transfer their business to the new line, and therefore the third step only remained—that of obtaining the consent of the Siberian Telegraph

authorities to the retransmission of code messages in vast quantities from their station at Blagoveschensk. This was done, and for a brief period the system worked satisfactorily, the wire-rope and the wooden cages threatening the cable companies with gradual extinction. But powerful influences were at work, and the life of the venturesome English company was fated to be a very short one. The Danish concern, the Great Northern Telegraph Company, was the one most harmed, and as the Danish Royal Family (including the then Czarina) were large shareholders, diplomacy made itself soon felt. The Russian Minister at Peking was instructed to stop the new enterprise by fair means or foul, and he proceeded to work without a moment's delay. Li Hung Chang was then Viceroy at Tientsin and also the Director-General of the Chinese Telegraph Administration, and to him the Russian Minister turned with friendly presents. After some blandishments, Li Hung Chang succumbed to the attractions of gold bars snugly nestled in silk-lined boxes, and the Chinese telegraphs began a policy of obstruction which, aided by the Siberian authorities across the Amur, delayed messages for an indefinite period and disgusted all. Finally, the death-blow was given by the Berne International Telegraph Convention, which decided that the uniting of frontiers in such a fashion was not permissible.

The chief point of interest in the history of this curious concern is the drawing together of Li Hung Chang and his entourage with the Russian Legation

in Peking over a question intimately concerning Manchuria. Li was given all sorts of assurances over what was merely an affair of small importance, and from that day onward China's greatest man played a diplomatic game the secret history and explanation of which have yet to be disclosed.

The Far Eastern tour of the Czarewitch in 1891 made the highest personages in Russia fully cognisant of things—the rising importance of Japan and her future position in the Far East, and the desirability of consolidating the Russian power in the Far East before it was too late. A glance at the map explains all this at once. As a maritime power Japan is most favourably placed. Just as England stands out like the sentinel of Europe, so does Japan command the Pacific seas which wash the coasts of the mainland. The three islands of Yezo, Hondo, and Kiushiu are spread-eagled along the Asiatic mainland in such a fashion from Saghalien to the Straits of Korea as to make the Land of the Rising Sun the absolute master of the shallow seas adjoining the coast. For six months of the year it may be said that Russian ships can only escape from the ice-bound trap of the Sea of Japan by steaming through the Straits of Korea, which are commanded by the island of Tsushima; for both the northern and southern extremities of Saghalien are practically impassable, the first owing to the ice, the second because the Perouse Straits are commanded from Hokhaido. The two facts which so impressed Russian statesmen became in

the natural course of events but one, which is best expressed in a new fashion: a race with Japan for the mastership of the mainland—the mainland of Manchuria, Korea, and North China. If Russia could seize fresh vantage points which would minimise, if not largely destroy, Japan's undoubted superiority in natural positions, Russia might yet be the maritime master of the Far East.

The cutting of the first sod of the great Siberian railway by the Czarewitch in 1891, near Vladivostock, was really the official opening of a question which may yet make Russia bleed to death. It was perfectly understood in Japan that the linking up of the Russian Far East with the far-away portions of the great northern power must eventually bring Russia face to face with a problem which would mean war to the knife. For from the very beginning the Mikado's ministers, and more especially the elder statesmen, have been working with maps in front of them, and have realised that the march to the south of Russian battalions would be ordered one fine day, and the great peril confront them.

But if Russia was quietly preparing, so was Japan. The Japanese army and navy, although small, were yearly becoming more and more efficient and well-organised, and when circumstances arose in Korea which the Mikado's Government considered to justify armed intervention, that intervention was ordered and took place with a calmness and rapidity which astonished the entire world. Japan

was determined that Korea should be dominated by no one but herself, foreseeing that Chinese statesmen might one day transfer the feeble claim to suzerainty which the Dragon Throne possessed over the Hermit Kingdom to another power, if that power could not be bought off in any other way. When, therefore, China despatched troops to Korea, Japan resented it, and the result was that war was formally declared on the 3rd of August, 1894. Events marched very rapidly, and once more the world was amazed. The successes of the Japanese military and naval forces at Phonyang and Hai-yang on the 16th and 17th of September opened the way for the Japanese invasion of Manchuria by land and sea; so the Yalu was crossed and surprise landings made on the Liao-tung coast. The Yalu columns pushed rapidly across south-eastern Fengtien and captured Fêng-huang-ch'êng, Hsiu-yen, and Hai-ch'êng without great difficulties. The Liao-tung expeditions, landing at P'i-tzu-wo and Hua-yuan-k'ou, north of Talienwan, in November, marched down to Port Arthur and successfully occupied it. During the winter there were several desperate struggles in Manchuria. The Chinese made four separate attempts to retake Hai-ch'êng, fearing for the safety of Moukden, the ancient Manchu capital; and it was not until the month of March, 1895, that the inland town of Newchwang fell into Japanese hands and that their combined armies drove the last Chinese forces across the Liao.

But Japan, in gaining her own end and humbling her huge adversary for all time, had helped Russia —at least for the time being. The Manchurian spectre, looming so vast on the Amur horizon, ceased to frighten the Russians, for they saw all the many years of drilling and re-arming which had been going on in the three eastern provinces destroyed in a few blows. But if China had become for the time being a negligible quantity, it was not so with Japan. Almost before the Russians could realise it, Japan had declared her intention of holding the Liao-tung peninsula, was actively preparing documents and treaties to that effect, and had become the dominant power in Korea. The question of the Asiatic mainland appeared solved to Russia's eternal ruin. But Russia, although sorely alarmed, was not yet defeated, for in masterly diplomacy she has not her equal in the world. Li Hung Chang, whom China had nominated her Plenipotentiary to conclude the Treaty of Peace at Shimonoseki, crossed the seas with secret chuckling, for five years' intimacy with Russian diplomatists made him certain that they would not fail him in the hour of need. It was even so, and "the Liao-tung ceded" soon read "the Liao-tung retroceded," owing to the "friendly representations" of a triplicate of powers. Japan, though she had demonstrated her position in Korea with great clearness, had undoubtedly been checkmated in Manchuria; and so, gritting her teeth, she redoubled her preparations which would be called to a supreme test at some not too distant date.

The diplomatic year of 1896 in the Far East is of great interest. Did Count Cassini, the Russian Minister at Peking, conclude the famous secret convention or did he not? Is the whole story another one of those inventions which have been so copious of late years in the Far East, or does it rest on a substratum of truth? It is hard to say, but although memoranda of great importance may have been exchanged, to anyone who knows the ability of Chinese statesmen and the manner in which they inevitably manage to introduce saving clauses, there can not be a shadow of doubt about one thing—that no matter what promises China may have been induced to make, she left herself a loophole through which she could slip. The statement that she virtually signed away Manchurian provinces in 1896 may be classed as a pure fabrication; she may have consented to some things, but only with the knowledge that other things were in course of preparation which would sooner or later annul her private arrangements.

I have discussed elsewhere various aspects of these recent years, the beginning of the "active" history of those baneful things, the railway, the rouble, and the Russo-Chinese Bank, and so need not further dwell on them. In 1900 we have the Boxers and the Manchurian Question complete, throbbing, insistent. How it happened, how Russia has used her opportunities, and the present dismal state of affairs, are all treated with some detail in the pages that follow.

CHAPTER I

THE VOYAGE

Russia in Asia begins, nominally, when you step on board one of the Chinese Eastern Railway's "Express Steamers," as they are curiously called, at Nagasaki or Shanghai. Three years ago there was hardly a vessel of this growing Russian fleet on the China seas. To-day the Chinese Eastern Railway's sea-going service, as it is grandiloquently styled, numbers nearly two dozen vessels, each new one finer than the last, and more calculated to impress the traveller with Russia's growing might in the Far East. The very nomenclature of these ships is in itself a confession of Muscovite ambitions. First come the *Manchuria*, the *Mongolia*, and the *Korea*, fine vessels of four thousand tons, each named after countries destined to become mere Russian provinces, unless some one calls a halt. Then come the *Amur*, the *Argun*, the *Shilka*, the *Sungari*, and the *Nonni*, rivers to which Russia alone, of all the European powers, has access, and which she resolutely intends to keep closed to the rest of the world. Manchuria's provincial

capitals follow with the *Moukden*, the *Kirin*, and the *Tsitsihar*. And finally come Manchuria's frontier and lesser towns such as *Nagadan*, *Khailar*, *Ninguta*, *Petuna*, and others, until the score and more have all been named. From Nagasaki and Shanghai, the finest vessels voyage to and fro, making connection with the world-famed express trains that steam from the end of Asia to the end of Europe without a break. The lesser ones nibble at the Korean ports, are scheduled to steam in and out of your Gensans, your Chemulpos, and your Fusans, so that Japan may clearly know that she is not the only claimant to the Hermit Kingdom. So the China seas from Shanghai to the Gulf of Pechili, from the Korean coast right up to Vladivostock, are covered with vessels flying the hybrid flag of the Russian Railway Company—the half Russian half Chinese monster—and Russia's object is near accomplished.

I have said that Russia in Asia nominally begins with the Express Steamers; it is, however, only nominally, for, the moment you step on board your floating express, you realise that Russia has tackled what is beyond her power. For it is not really Russia that you meet with on your ship, and, as all the Czar's ministers would have us know, what is not purely Russian is not Russian at all, and must be counted a source of weakness rather than of strength.

My steamer, the *Manchuria*, was built in Austrian Trieste, fitted with English fittings and Yankee

notions, with occasional relapses into *rococo* French; was officered by men from the Baltic of unmistakable Teutonic origin; decorated with Bohemian panels and burnt-wood picture work from southern Germany; had her engine-room and stokeholds filled with Chinese firemen and artificers; was crowded with Ningpo deck-hands jabbering pidgin English, and understanding nothing else; was trying to beat up Japanese, Chinese, and British cargo for ports in the leased territory that are not loved; and, finally, we were fed by a China Treaty Port cook, suddenly switched off under stern compulsion with the most terrible results to Russian Far Eastern Extension table requirements. Is the confusion sufficiently confounded?

But although I have enumerated some of the cosmopolitan curiosities on what was originally intended to be a purely Russian steamer to the great glory of God and the Czar, it was in the saloon that came the crowning blow of all. There a Chinese was compradore, chief steward, and supreme major-domo, and apart from a staff of his own countrymen he employed and paid also half-a-dozen Russian stewards, clad in clean white jackets and neat blue trousers, whom he is under contract to provide. Think of it, all you who study foreign policies and politics—a Chinaman an employer of foreign labour on a Russian ship, and that labour Russian. The Slav had best beware before he is hopelessly engulfed in the bottomless abyss of Chinese ingenuity and silent diplomacy. I thought it all very

amusing until I saw one of the Russian stewards aforesaid approach his Chinese chief and meekly ask for something. Then I winced, for it is somehow not good for the white man to be the servant of the yellow.

The passenger-list of this good ship was the Far Eastern question in a more or less concrete and instructive form. Russian militarism was represented by half-a-dozen young officers of that delightfully unknown quantity, the Manchurian Railway or Frontier Guards, who smoked endless cigarettes and played endless cards in a semi-mufti attire. The usual number of Danes, Germans, and other Continentals were to be noticed, with a heavy contingent of doubtful Japanese in the steerage. A strong force of Englishmen from all parts of the world completed the list, for, in spite of the American, the Englishman is still the premier globe-trotter in the East, and the new trans-continental route must be tested.

But, although we were the political situation in the flesh, we were careful not to talk politics ; for even in September the betting was heavily in favour of war, and here, so near the disputed territories, argument soon degenerates into pitched battles, especially when the passions are as fierce as they have been of late in the Far East. So, when the land disappeared below the horizon line, the Manchurian question was likewise lost sight of, and armed neutrality became the order of the day. The conversation turned on ships and men that go down to

the sea, and the prospects of these fine steamers from the purely business point of view. Half the men at the table knew ships and shipping from the practical side, and each promptly pointed out defects which disqualified vessels of the Russian fleet from being dividend-earners. One man had just been down into our engine-room and discovered that we were only working our starboard engine. The port engine was chronically out of order, and had been so since the ship had been on the Nagasaki run; but the engineers shrugged their shoulders when docking was suggested, and said that one engine was enough for their purpose. Another man proved to us conclusively with a pencil and a piece of paper that the ship could never clear her running expenses with the big margin that would have to be allowed for depreciation and her small cargo capacity. "Too light and too pretty," was the general consensus of opinion; too much show and too little business. It is always the same story. However, Russia's object has been temporarily attained, and her flag flies everywhere on the China seas. But can bad business methods and criminal carelessness spell anything but disaster in the long run? Time alone will show.

We left Nagasaki with the typhoon signals flying, although we had delayed our departure hour after hour, and were willing to risk anything so long as we only got off. The whole manner in which the postponing was carried out was most significant. First, we were going to leave at ten in the morning;

then, at the last minute, the agent, the sub-agent, and the deputy-sub-agent—for the Russian must always work in numbers since he is not trusted alone —came hurriedly on board and argued the point with the captain, the chief officer, and the chief engineer. It did not transpire whether it was a wretched port-engine which was causing the trouble, but after an hour's wrangle, during which our hopes rose and fell as the balance swayed this way or that, 1.30 was made the corrected sailing time. Two minutes before that fatal hour the company's launch with the various agents and sub-agents, all waving frantically, came off to us again and stopped us dead just as we were casting off. There was another conference, another postponement, and more talk. Finally, late in the afternoon, we did actually get off, but the frequently postponed departure and the hopeless indecision afforded us plenty of conversation, and was an object lesson in the division of counsels and the lack of authority so noticeable among Russians.

At the harbour entrance we passed the *Glory* and the *Leviathan* which had just arrived with Admiral Bridge. These two splendid ships, decked in their new grey-black war paint, looked veritable dogs of war and created an immense impression among the Russian travellers, an effect which was still further enhanced by our passing a Russian cruiser of antiquated appearance a few chains further down. The Russians shook their heads, looked again and again, and confessed aloud that they were after all soldiers

and not sailors. Not a nice outlook this, when supremacy is passing more and more from the land to the sea. Soon night came on, and with it the typhoon. The slaughter among the passengers was terrible, for the typhoon is not a pleasant thing even when you are sheltered by the islands of the Land of Morning Calm, and we rocked until we could rock no more. With tossing bow we headed through the Korean archipelago, our starboard engine pushing us along with groaning agony. In the morning there was one very pale and anxious man, but his pallor and anxiety were not the result of sea-sickness. He was a Russian naval officer travelling back to Port Arthur after a short furlough, and he groaned his explanation in perfect English: "All through the archipelago during the night at full speed! I have just charted the coast myself, and I would not do such a thing for millions. The captain is crazy. Every minute I thought we would strike." It was but another instance of Slav unconcern, another exemplification of the careless "Nichevo."

CHAPTER II

DALNY THE DOOMED

The tail-end of the typhoon had left everybody longing for land, for the typhoon is a bitter fiend; and when at eleven in the morning a yellow blur heaved up against the horizon, there was a general sigh of relief and the cabins gave forth their quota of seeming dead. There was not much to see, however, for some time to come, and it was not until we were already several hours overdue that the coast line became clear. Once one got a fair look, there was no mistaking of what it reminded one. It was the cold, barren hill-land of Shantung over again, with deep, very deep, blue water right up to the shores. Bays and inlets cut the coast into a hundred quaint designs; ragged cliffs of granite frowned down on the water, and a lurching junk or two beat in battle against the wind to gain the open. We rounded a corner, and then Dalny burst into view. I cannot say that the first view was impressive or calculated to thrill one with the coming greatness of the place. In the foreground you saw half-a-dozen giant dredgers, sparsely distributed over several miles

of water and looking very dirty, very forlorn, and very tired. Farther on there were two or three steamers moored alongside the railway wharf, all flying the Russian flag. Behind this you vaguely saw a confused mass of buildings, but what they were like it was impossible to imagine. Even a long way off, a clear impression of the loneliness of the place was somehow conveyed; the distances were superb, but you felt something was missing. In truth something was missing, and that something is called success. Briefly put, Dalny is a failure. Eighteen millions of roubles have been pitched into the bay in Utopian dreams, or squandered on buildings, officially-built (save the mark!), that are already crumbling in the super-dry air. Eighteen millions have been lost, and irretrievably lost, as far as the Russian Government is concerned. But I am going too fast and am shouting before it is time. Our overdue ship slowly floated alongside the railway wharf, and a horde of dirty Shantung coolies pushed up massive gangways. We were not yet allowed to land, however, as our passports had to be viséd by His Imperial Majesty's police; for Dalny is in the leased territory of Kuantung, and is therefore subject to the full rigours of the Russian system. This viséing was a lengthy process, but it gave us an opportunity to view our surroundings. Alongside of us a triple line of track ran down to the end of the pier. The pier itself was a magnificent structure of solid granite, symbolical of the Russian indifference to the spending of money—even when that spending

is sheer foolishness. On the further side of the pier were stretched immense godowns, roofed with corrugated iron and partly piled with chests of Yangtsze tea. Lying round in the utmost confusion were other rotting masses of miscellaneous cargo, and half a dozen red-shirted isvostchicks with their two-horsed droskies completed the picture. It was not gay, of that you may be certain, although the sun was shining brightly in an azure sky, and the hills stood out in the distance as clear as cameos. There was too much emptiness and too few men; too much planning and too feeble results; something wrong, although you could not precisely say what.

Presently we got our passports and tumbled into droskies, which travelled rapidly over the bumps and ruts that the Russian calls roads, towards the town, distant a mile or two away from the wharves. The first inhabited street we passed was in its way surely unique. Briefly, there were rows of barrack-like houses about fifteen feet high, made of crumbling grey brick, with woodwork painted green or muddy-white, and unutterably dirty. Most of them were small shops run by Chinese or Japanese, and apparently eking out none too cheerful an existence. Further on we came to a large open space, called a square in the town-plans. Then we passed a bridge leading over an immense railway open-cut, which runs right through the heart of the town towards the sea. This open-cut is a thing to which I shall again refer later on. Finally we came to Dalny, the officially-built. I say

"officially-built" advisedly, for the Russian Government is responsible for the building of the only substantial part of the town. I puzzled for some time, trying to think where I had seen a collection of buildings resembling that before my eyes. At last I remembered. It was Tsingtau again, minus German thoroughness and attention to detail. But although the town engineer had followed German ideas and models, he was obviously not entirely tied to them. Every species of architecture abounded, from the Swiss cottage to quaint buildings faced with Italian loggias, from Elizabethan houses to strange fluted hybrids. The Government architect must have allowed his fancy to run riot with a vengeance, for never has such a heterogeneous collection been seen. Each house is different from its neighbour; each strives after ideals that fight with those across the street.

We had meanwhile arrived at the "Hotel Dalny," the premier hostelry of the town. A rather pretty if dusty verandah-restaurant in front of the hotel, decked with creepers and honeysuckle, led us foolishly to suppose that we had reached tolerable civilisation, but alas! and alack! when we inspected the one remaining bedroom, our brief hopes were dashed to the ground. Oh, that bedroom, if I but had the pen to describe it! Musty, evil-smelling, and dirty, it was not a fit abode for a white man. The bed was the worst of all, and uneasy must be the head and uneasier the body that lay upon it. However, I was luckily the last arrival, and

DALNY IN WINTER.

so I made up my mind to seek a resting-place elsewhere. I proceeded to the "Hotel Russe," an establishment of the secondary class, and there I was shown a room that was more promising. Night, however, soon showed me that I had again been guilty of foolish if innocent thoughts, for I knew but little sleep owing to causes which it is unnecessary to specify to this much-travelled world. When morning came, I remonstrated with mine host—told him solemnly that the insects were too awful. Mine host was, however, not apologetic; he was irate and even more than irate; indignantly waving his office pen above his head, he offered me one rouble per head for captured trophies! I answered that capture was impossible, at least as far as I was concerned. "Ah, then," he said, "do not complain; we are clean here, and we do not understand you Englishmen who are always fighting!"

Late in the afternoon I hired a drosky and went to make further investigation. As in Europe all paths lead to Rome, so in Dalny are you inevitably drawn towards the great railway open-cut. It is indeed a wonderful sight, and one truly illustrative of the Russian Empire-builder. Four thousand coolies were at work digging, digging away and apparently trying to cut the Liao-tung peninsula in two. Already there is room for a dozen double tracks, but this not enough. Entire hills are being cut away, put into baskets, dumped into endless trains of open trucks and carted away rapidly towards the

sea. There the earth is used to fill up great piers and wharves built in shell with blocks of massive masonry which are still only half complete and require vast sums more to finish them. In the harbour itself, which could accommodate the fleets of half the world and the commerce of the entire East, gigantic dredgers are still dredging, and the great cargo-boats go out with other massive blocks of solid concrete to drop into the sea and build up the titanic systems of breakwaters planned by the man who wished to create a London of the Far East by sheer expenditure of treasure. Everywhere are the same strong armies of coolies, clumsily working under the lazy superintendence of lethargic Russian overseers, with no trade and no white population except Government servants. The Government-built houses have their bricks already crumbling, cracked by the fierce rays of the northern sun. The unofficial land bought up by eager speculators a year or two ago, on which houses had to be erected in consideration for the nominal price paid, is either covered with miserable shanties which have doubtless managed to satisfy official requirements by a liberal use of the purse, or is littered with bricks of building operations suddenly stopped. The Russian Bear still goes on doggedly with his absurd official scheme, for it is too late to stop, and every extra disbursement means something in the pockets of officials to whom squeeze is as the breath of life. In the official plan of the town the "aspect" of the place when it will have been completed is glowingly

portrayed. Here is official Dalny with the Government offices and Government houses all grouped conveniently together; there commercial Dalny with the merchants' and shopkeepers' streets standing in ordered ranks; farther on the Chinese quarters; then the harbour breakwaters, granite docks, electric power-houses, waterworks and such-like. Each has its place, every detail has been thought out, but of all these vast undertakings little is really ready. The speculator is disgusted, and so are all private Russians. The bi-weekly European express and the railway steamers remain the only *raisons d'être* of the place. The streets are deserted except for a few dozen rickshas and half as many droskies. The very dogs look weary and seem to long for the days gone by. Occasionally, a company of infantry goes by or a sotnia of Cossacks canters wildly through the streets. At night the electric light sputters on desolation and deserted roads, and mocks the genius whose brain gave birth to them. On the hills which rise gently up from all sides of the town you see blotches of upturned earth suggesting masked batteries, or the occasional gleam of a bayonet in the sun's rays. Of a Custom House there is no sign. I made inquiries, and vainly tried to see two officials who are said to be in town charged with the opening, but all without success.

The story of the proposed Custom House is worth recounting. Every leased territory in China has its Chinese Custom House—manned by Sir Robert Hart's men—as a convenience to mer-

chants and trade; so, since the Kuantung peninsula was leased, it was proposed that a Custom House should likewise be opened at Dalny, the commercial centre of Kuantung. Russia, hearing of this, promptly took steps. One morning in Peking, M. Pokotilow, the *deus ex machinâ* of the Russo-Chinese Bank, called on Sir Robert Hart, leading by the hand Russia's nominee. "This," he said, "is to be the Commissioner of Customs at Dalny; he must enter your service." Sir Robert Hart, whose diplomacy excels even that of the Russian, though he be but an Englishman, bowed his acknowledgment and prepared to wait. Time in the Far East is the greatest diplomatist; procrastination defeats the weaving of a Machiavelli and outwits all. The Dalny Custom House will never be known.

So everything in the town is dead or dying except for the Russian Government, its soldiers, and coolies. Three years' unaudited accounts, it is whispered, are frightening the officials with dread fears now that their protector is gone. Briefly, Minister de Witte's star has set, and with it that of Dalny, if it ever boasted of such a tangible thing as a star. No longer is it a sun of happy augury which shines above Dalny. Dalny is doomed, for the town is a failure, and Viceroy Alexeieff has stamped that failure further by declaring that Port Arthur shall alone be heard of in the Kuantung territory in five years' time. Who knows if even Port Arthur will be heard of then?

Artillery Inspection, Kuantung Territory.

CHAPTER III

PORT ARTHUR

A BELL clanged lazily as we drove up to the Dalny station and warned us that we had but little time to lose. My companion, however, who was a Russian, smiled at my nervous haste and hinted that there was no cause for alarm, as Manchurian trains are nothing if not complaisant. It was true that we were too late to buy tickets; instead of tickets we were given permits to mount the train and buy tickets at the next station; but in spite of all this absurdly complicated procedure, this red-tapeism raised to the twentieth power, it was a good many minutes before the train actually started. The first-class carriage in which we duly installed ourselves was brand new, and smelt of it very much. The carriage was of the usual corridor type, and had half-a-dozen separate compartments beautifully upholstered and finished off in stained wood. Each compartment accommodated two people, and the pulling of a few levers and bolts converted the couch and the back of the couch into a couple of comfortable beds, placed one above the other. The

a local express and takes three hours to cover forty miles is surely typical of Slav slow-footedness.

As we neared Port Arthur, the outward and visible signs of a first-class fortress became more apparent. It is true that military engineering has considerably altered since the days of Vauban, and that massive structures rising above the ground level are no longer much seen; but still it was possible to realise how impregnable Port Arthur is even from the land side. Everywhere signs are seen which indicate the presence of masked batteries, and sometimes one was able to enfilade optically a vast trench.

I have since learnt that there are four successive lines of entrenched works, stretching from two miles outside Port Arthur to far beyond the range of the heaviest siege ordnance, and that numberless detached forts cap these and render all attacks, in no matter what force, enterprises of the most terrible character. Common report has it that the Japanese Headquarter Staff has long made up its mind that only an immense sacrifice of life could crown a land attack with success, and that such an attack would entail a loss of from twenty to thirty thousand men. It is likewise said that the Russians expect and desire such an attack, and that a gap has been purposely left through which the assault would have to be made. This is, of course, copied from the original on the northern Franco-Prussian frontier, planned by the celebrated French general who was responsible for the refortifying of France after the disastrous war of 1870, which entailed the great

THE AMERICAN VOICE IN THE MANCHURIAN QUESTION—U.S.S. "HELENA" MADE SNUG IN A MUD DOCK FOR THE WINTER AT NEWCHWANG.

THE FAMOUS NARROW ENTRANCE TO PORT ARTHUR.

frontier rectification. Once troops, flushed with victory, have poured through the gap, after the sham retreat has been made, they would be caught in a vice by the enemy, and relentlessly hammered to pieces. So far as this deals with Port Arthur, it is of course but the gossip of the man in the street; but it is hard to see, after having gone hurriedly over the ground, and noted the natural strength of the place, what other alternative remains.

If Dalny is a dead city, Port Arthur is the exact reverse. It is bustling and teeming with life, and everywhere there are signs that much money is being spent and much profitably earned. The streets are thronged with droskies and rickshas, coolies and carts, soldiers and sailors, and finally with the much-despised and variegated civilian of the north. All are busy and have something to do. Three years ago there were but thirty droskies and a few score of rickshas; to-day the number of carriages runs into hundreds, and the rickshas have multiplied in like fashion. Three years ago there were no hotels dreamed of, except wretched inns outdoing the doss-houses of Europe in stench and squalor. To-day a vast hotel built on a palatial scale is almost completed, and in three months' time the "Grand" of Yokohama will no longer occupy the premier place among the hostelries of the Far East.

Port Arthur was without a creditable church, so the authorities decided that there must be a cathedral worthy of God and the Czar. A site has been chosen on the top of a hill, commanding a view for

many miles on all sides; the hill has been pared off flat, and eighty thousand roubles expended on the foundations alone. In a year's time the Greek cross will crown a building costing millions, and symbolical of Russia's hugeness, but where the money comes from no one knows or cares. Old Port Arthur was cramped and shanty-like and the commercial population growing and waxing fat on Government contracts, so the construction of a new Port Arthur was no sooner thought of than ordered.

Two miles away from the old town the new civilian and commercial quarter is now being rapidly built up. Broad streets and avenues are already there; the hotel is almost completed; banks and hongs are rising as if by magic; scaffolding and beams choke each vacant lot, and in a year or so old Port Arthur, mostly composed of Chinese buildings, crudely adapted to Russian use, will be torn down and given over exclusively to the military and naval authorities. On the other side of the town is the Chinese and Japanese quarter. There you find your humble Chinese trader in his thousands and tens of thousands, not so humble, however, since he has learnt to kick and cuff like any Russian, cheapening his wares to crowds of coolies, carters, and who-not. Seven hundred Japanese are also there, engaging in every manner of traffic, and earning roubles where they could scarcely earn sen in their own country. The harbour is full of steamers, junks, and warships. Godown-room cannot be had for a fortune, and bearded Sikh watchmen guard countless stacks of

food-stuffs and drinkables sufficient for years. On the side of a hill, the viceregal residence of Admiral Alexeieff surveys the harbour, the forts, and the fleets. Right in front of the Viceroy's windows are the famous narrows of Port Arthur harbour, so shallow and so hemmed in by the neighbouring hills that a single battleship sunk with care would block the entrance for an indefinite period. To the right, Golden Hill stands up proudly with forts and batteries, armed with mammoth Creusot guns, defying attack. Behind are other hills all crowned and capped with other forts. Bugle-calls and the gay music of marching bands break the silence, and give one the key-note of the place—strutting militarism. Below in the old town, sheltered as best they can, are the vast warehouses of the commissariat, thrown open so that every eye may see the countless sacks of flour and grain, and all ready to provide the ten million meals that must be in store should Port Arthur be besieged and cut off. On the foreshore are huge stacks of coal and lumber; nearer the Viceroy's palace, a single granite dry-dock with machine-shops busily whirring in the air. Isvostchicks flog their two-horsed carriages rapidly round corners, darting to and fro with unerring skill in and out of the traffic. Ships are discharging their cargoes with groaning choruses from the Chinese coolie-gangs. Everybody is in a hurry; everything is being rushed through rapidly, for who knows what the future contains in this inscrutable Far East—who knows what is going to happen?

Such is the Port Arthur of to-day, with the eventful 8th of October, 1903, drawing near—very near. It is alive, armed to the teeth, provisioned for three years, defiant, sanguine. Port Arthur is symbolical of the Russian Bear, with paw raised ready to strike or be struck. The Bear has climbed down from the ice and snow of the bitter north, and will not move.

PORT ARTHUR'S ONLY DRY DOCK.

ANCIENT PAGODA AT LIAOYANG, A MONUMENT OF EARLIER CONQUERORS IN MANCHURIA.

CHAPTER IV.

SUNDAY IN PORT ARTHUR

I WAS awakened in the morning by the booming of big guns and a noise of excitement in the town. I got up hastily and found that there was a regular battle in progress. The Russian fleet, which had come down from Vladivostock, was attempting to force an entrance into the harbour and the forts were replying to the enemy's fire with terrible salvoes of fortress artillery which shook the whole town.

After lasting half-an-hour or so, all ended as suddenly as it had begun and I heard afterwards that both the naval and military authorities of Port Arthur were thoroughly satisfied with the condition of the sea-defences and the consequent impregnability of the harbour. In any case, to guard against the unexpected, during the past couple of weeks thirty more heavy guns of about 15 centimetres calibre have been placed in position on the sea-forts, and one artillery officer was recently heard to declare that they had no more room for any more guns, and that, as it was, there was a heavy shortage in garrison artillery-men. Even if it is a different story in

Manchuria proper, there can be no doubt about Port Arthur's readiness for war, although that readiness may differ considerably from, let me say, a German standard of efficiency.

To give an example. I witnessed the unloading of some of the new fortress guns I have just referred to, and it was certainly an eye-opener in many ways. Instead of hoisting these guns from the railway trucks in which they lay, they were carelessly flung off anyhow by fatigue parties, with the result that all their wooden-casings were smashed like so much match-wood, tubes dented, screws lost, etc., etc. This can hardly be good even for fortress guns, and how the Russians ever keep anything in working order must be a mystery to most people.

Sunday in Port Arthur is not a day of misery such as one is condemned to in most places over which the Union Jack floats. On the contrary, it is a day of eating, drinking (very much drinking), and celebrating the beginning of another week of more or less loaf—for no true Russian really works, so long as there is the foreigner and the Jew. It is all very wicked, it may be, but it is infinitely more amusing and more human to pass the Sunday as the Russians do than in that most terrible Exeter Hall gloom and godliness of which all Englishmen wot. In Port Arthur you begin the day at mid-day or a little later, with a tiffin of imposing title but disappointing size. Saratoff's on the local Bund used to be the place to go to, but it has been lately eclipsed by the Nicobadza in the New Town.

After eating a few Russian dinners and tiffins you begin to understand the true innate reason of the zakouska. It is not only not an appetiser, but it is even a de-appetiser, if I may be allowed to coin and explain a pretty word. To those who are ignorant and allow themselves to be imposed on, the zakouska is represented as the solid equivalent of and complement to that liquid *apéritif*, the glass of vodka, which precedes a meal so that you may the better enjoy that meal. You may possibly be induced to think this with the lapse of time, but so long as he preserves his independence of mind and stomach the intelligent man will recognise very rapidly the insufficiency of the Russian meal if he attacks it from a purely European standpoint, and will understand the true significance of the zakouska. To begin with an imposing and really excellent soup and end suddenly with the next course or the one after is a little jarring, and makes you remember bitterly that you have transgressed the unwritten law—for you should have gorged yourself with zakouska and bread, and eaten the meat in your soup with defiant knife and fork to have satisfied the devouring appetite you suffer from in this splendid climate of the north. At least, this I learnt on my Sunday, and on Monday I ate like those around me.

After your Sunday tiffin there are many ways of amusing yourself in Port Arthur, but you should go to the races if you are correct. Some blessed man conceived the happy idea of these Sunday races, during six weeks in spring and six in autumn, so

that Chefoo and Tientsin may send their jockeys to ride, and that all Port Arthur, military, naval, and civilian, may be free to watch them. From half-past one onwards all roads leading to the race-course are thronged with carriages and rickshas. Drunken isvostchicks perform miracles of driving, and seem to have but one object in view—that of passing all other conveyances at the most impossible rate of speed. You reach your destination, however, always in safety, for if there is one thing your Russian understands it is horses and their management.

The race-course is charmingly situated a mile or two outside the town, on the parade-ground. It is, in fact, the outer rim of the parade-ground, duly staked out and roped off, with a funny, box-shaped grand stand, stuck in the wrong place owing to military exigencies, and with everything very impromptu and very countrified. A good-natured and jolly-looking general—the Commissariat General—is chairman of the race-club, and shakes hands affectionately with all Englishmen he meets on the course, doubtless with the idea of doing homage to the sport of kings.

A military band was playing when we arrived, as only a super-music-loving people can play, and there was an air of gaiety about the place. In the middle distance two strangely-attired stewards were wrestling with the scales, and a little further on, in a ring perilously close to the band, was the horse-flesh of the meeting—five China ponies and four walers. Add a few hundred people of all sorts and conditions

in and around the grand stand, the quantities of soldiers perched on every eminence away from the course, and you will see the picture as I saw it. There was even a five-rouble *pari-mutuel*, where, after the usual manner of *pari-mutuels*, you either lost your five roubles or won back thirty or forty kopecks and your punt. In Port Arthur everybody backs the favourite, and the favourite always wins.

Soon the racing began. It was not very exciting or very amusing, and there were only four races, with from two to three entries in each, but still it was jolly and rather like a picnic. There were women galore of several sorts and varieties, but in Kuantung and Manchuria the lady with a past is, with few exceptions, the lady who is always present. A singular code of etiquette is observed; for instance, I saw a lieutenant just off his ship salute with great courtesy and give his arm to a lady of indifferent virtue. No one paid any attention to him, and he passed his superior officers and their wives with the utmost unconcern. Everyone does it in Port Arthur, so why be surprised?

Port Arthur winners meet with the applause they deserve, and everybody somewhat artlessly seizes the opportunity to offer everybody else within range drinks to celebrate each event. In Manchuria you do not say after the manner of Englishmen, "Have a drink," you simply drink, and then wait for the next bottle to be opened. Consequently, by the time the last race was over on the eventful Sunday I am speaking of, nobody wanted to do such a dull

thing as go home, and there was a general adjournment to a bicycle track which, some genius had discovered, was about to commence operations. Another military band was playing here, and as we entered a race was just finishing. It was coldly received by the crowd, however, which was feeling supremely cheerful and wanted something funny to laugh at. As luck had it, we had not long to wait, for the twenty verst record of Manchuria was about to be attempted by a curious-looking young man. Most lowly Russians are born with their top-boots on, and forget to take them off the rest of their natural lives; but the record-breaker was an exception. He was mostly hair—hair hanging down his back, his face, his arms, legs, everywhere, in fact—straw-coloured, albino-looking, horrid hair, and he had no boots. He was also clad in diminutive pink tights, and he looked hungry at the start. The race began with the stroke of a bell, and the record-breaker, unpaced and solitary in his glory, started to sprint. Everybody somehow guessed from the beginning that it was going to be funny, and it was with a vengeance. After a few rounds the rider thought things were monotonous, so shouted to the time-keeper to give him his time. The time-keeper was diplomatic, and waited till he came round again, and then attempted to whisper it in his ear, so that the secret of his speed should not be lightly divulged. The results were disastrous. The record-breaker thought somehow that the time-keeper wished to Kishineff him (this

was a happy delusion), swerved violently, nearly came off, and was for a time apparently quite hopelessly tied up in his long hair. The crowd howled with delight and waited for more. Then the cyclist got thirsty, and called for a glass of water. It was handed to him as he flew past at fifteen miles an hour, and he proceeded to drink it with amorous glances at the ladies. Fancy a champion engaged in the heart-breaking process of lowering a short distance record drinking whilst he rode! It would be impossible anywhere else; it is quite natural amongst Russians, where the unnatural is the most commonly met with. On his returning the glass, the man who tried to catch it missed it, and it struck someone else on the head; the house rose in its enthusiasm—everybody wanted to give him something, and he was invited to endless zakouskas, drinks—anything, everything. The man who was hit accepted all the drinks, and could only be calmed by being made speechless. Such is life on the Port Arthur bicycle track.

When we left we had only half an hour to ourselves, for dinner was soon due with more bands, more music, more everything. Every regiment has its band here, and as there are more regiments than men know of, you have music wherever you go. And such music! They may not have the precision of German bands, that absolute excellence which only human automatons possess, but at least Russian musicians play with a swing and a dash that is delightful and soul-inspiring. Most of the bandsmen

are Jews, and are drafted into the bands partly owing to their national musical ability. After eleven in the evening the military bands stop, and the *cafés chantants* open their doors. Opening at eleven means an all-night performance, and indeed all the *figurantes* of a show are under stern contract not to evacuate their posts before four in the morning.

And then what drinking, what spending of money! Just as you must drive a drosky and not patronise the humble ricksha in the day-time, so at night must you only drink the sweet sickly champagne of Messrs. Roederer & Co. at ten roubles a bottle, and nothing else. The man receiving a hundred roubles or so a month will be seen drinking it just as freely as the Government contractor with millions to his credit, and no one is in the least surprised. How does the poor man do it? you will ask, and you may well ask. He merely squeezes like the Chinaman, only more coarsely, less artistically, and with a cynicism and a disregard for the immorality of the whole thing that is almost disconcerting. If he is an officer and is hard up, his friends pull the wires and he gets the job of building a fort or something else where he can get his fingers into the contracts. Or if he is a clerk, bookkeeper or what-not, he hangs in with the other people and splits the extra profit he earns from his master by spending it freely with his friends.

So the Sundays are gay, very gay, in Port Arthur and in the Russian Far East which boasts of a Viceroy. But if you go below the surface there

Review of the Troops by Viceroy on the Racecourse.

is a rottenness and a hollowness which is not reassuring for those who hope great things of Russia. Everything is on a false basis, on a false scale. There is reckless squandering of money by Government and people, barbaric profusion and ostentation side by side with almost primitive squalor. Men who occupy good positions, Government engineers, general officers, and merchants have houses of which a British mechanic would be ashamed. The outside is all right—it is the inside which damns. An utter lack of comfort, privacy, or cleanliness is the distinguishing mark of all, and if ever man confessed himself unworthy of the heritage of the Far East, it is the Russian of to-day, who is reaching out, with cries (charged with bluff alone) that his Oriental destiny is fulfilling itself.

CHAPTER V

BUSINESS IN A NEW WORLD WAY

THE Chinaman has made a great name for himself in business, and China is a place where men may deal for years and never know a pang. It is not so with the Russian, for he has never been looked upon in business except with suspicion; but it has been left for the new embryo empire on Chinese territory to show how impossible it is for either European or Chinaman to put trust in his dealings, political, commercial, or any other kind.

When the blight of 1900 settled on Manchuria, some beginnings in the new world trade I am about to speak of had already been made. Port Arthur and Harbin were towns of a sort—troops were there; and where there are troops, commerce, as it is understood here, commences. The position of the Russian when he pushes a step forward towards the southern goal is curious and without parallel among the other nations of the world. For the Russian comes like the model war correspondent, without a thing except the clothes in which he stands; and instead of bringing things himself from

his own home, he entrusts to others the task of procuring everything that may be necessary, making no stipulation as to where it shall come from. To buy from the outside world is absolutely necessary for him, since he has but little of modern make within his own borders. Now, when you begin empire-building extraordinary, you apparently need things without end. One want supplied merely shows the pressing need for something else. Years pass by, millions are carelessly and foolishly paid out, and still it does not seem to end. It is a splendid business while it lasts and if you manage to be paid before the crash comes.

In Manchuria there were, and indeed still are, in a somewhat lesser degree, four great sources of business existing quite independently and apart from the real trade of Manchuria, and carried on either at the seaports or along the iron track. These are the railway, the navy and naval works, the army and the army commissariat, and what might be called the general provisioning. The railway means sleepers, iron, steel, iron roofing, locomotives, tools, timber, and a thousand other things which could be largely obtained locally if the Russian had the Englishman's resourcefulness in a new country. The navy and the naval works comprise such things as dock-making, machine shops, machine sheds, machine tools, steam launches, dredgers, pontoons, &c., &c. The army always needs absolutely everything, for it comes out practically unequipped for the

new conditions of the service. As for general provisioning, there are fortunes to be made so long as you can supply the right brand of champagne (extra sweet) and do not put too much sawdust in the flour.

These are, however, simply a statement of the main categories; it is the methods to which I would direct particular attention; so let us proceed to work and do business—fortunately on paper.

The first thing you must be armed with in Manchuria is a big pocket-book full of rouble notes. Unless you have this, you might as well take the first steamer and go home, for in the Russian Far East the axiom that money makes money is propounded in an odd way, and you must be prepared to accept the ingenious local reading or none at all. Assuming you have the pocket-book, what do you do? You proceed to spend its contents apparently carelessly and without thought, but really on an admirable principle. You admit by deed that the pay of Russian employés, officials and high officers, in fact, of the whole official world, is on a ridiculously inadequate scale; that life is expensive and that contract-making is a legitimate source of revenue. For it is bona fide Government contracts, quasi-Government contracts, semi-Government contracts, and even demi-semi-Government contracts, which practically constitute all Russian trading in interesting Manchuria. As for the real trade of the country, neither the Russian, nor the merchant who has followed him, knows or cares anything about it.

Having duly ingratiated yourself with the official world both large and small, and engaged a poor, pale-looking person clothed in a uniform to act as your private intelligence officer, you calmly wait to see what the zephyrs, duly propitiated, will blow your way in this best of worlds. You may wait for weeks, and then suddenly one morning, as you are pondering over the curiousness of life and sharpening your pencils for want of something better to do, your poor pale youth aforesaid will dash in on you with face aflame and eyes sparkling, and exclaim, "Contracts, contracts, much contracts! 100,000 bags of flour for the army, ten locomotives for the railway, and 1,000,000 square feet of wood. Private tenders only." Ah, kind words, "private tenders only." For you have not to face the scrutiny of a righteous committee, each member of which is determined that the others shall not make more than he does. The glare of publicity will not shed its fierce light on your shortcomings, on your private arrangements. You may work quietly and quickly alone, and provided that you are blessed with average brains you need have no fear. So to work; count your notes and go forth. If you are well armed, the battle to be fought is already won.

So, mounting your carriage, you begin your work for those contracts. It may last a day, two days, five days, a week, two weeks, who knows? The Russian is sometimes slow to act, even when his percentage is duly fixed, for he will always want more. Suddenly one night, it might even be

three in the morning, he makes up his mind; contracts are brought to be signed, you sign them, and one-half is completed.

In the old days, when both Port Arthur and Harbin were a good deal smaller—that is, before the great invasion—your chase after the contract was a matter of local interest. In Port Arthur, for instance, there was only one small circle of streets to drive round after the contract-givers. You began on the local Bund, stopped for a moment at the small restaurant where so many millions have changed hands, and took a hasty look round. No, your man was not there, so, saying "Go on" to the isvostchick, you went round and round that small circle. If you had not caught up the man you were looking for on the third or fourth round, you knew you were going the wrong way. So you stopped your carriage and started the other way round. Sooner or later you certainly came across the mighty one going in this direction. This gave a local interest in the affair, and was the daily play. Rivals would ask frantically "What is it?" and without waiting for an answer, would start the chase after the rouble too, even with the heavy time-handicap against them. Now, however, the growth of towns has stopped all that, and on the modern telephone you may accomplish in a few seconds what once took you hours of excited and frantic driving round a half-mile course. Those were the good old days of two or three years ago, already bemoaned by all.

The contract duly secured means certain important things agreed to. It is sufficient to say that it has become an understood thing in Manchuria that number one of the department with which you are dealing gets seven and a half per cent. of the gross contract price; that number two has his two and a half per cent., and that numbers three, four, five, and six, down to the very palest and poorest young man in the shabby uniform on four or five pounds a month, split another five per cent. among themselves. This fifteen per cent. is in itself no small amount to have to add on to a huge invoice; but even this does not finish all. Nearly everything comes into the country by sea, for the railway is after all rather a make-believe, and only loves rich passengers and quick freights of the vodka type. Ships have to come into ports, and ports have port officers who are miserably poor, but withal have expensive tastes. So, unless you have a few thousand roubles handy for the port, these port officers may be your ruin, for they can very easily stop your unloading indefinitely until demurrage kills you.

So you must have your few thousands ever ready for eventualities, no matter how complete your arrangements may be. Prices, it is true, are not as exorbitant as they used to be. Money, so tight in other parts of the world, is even harder to find among the Russians of the Far East since the crisis. But, in spite of the dangers which immediately menace them unless they obey the unwritten

law, sometimes men are found who absolutely refuse to be parties to Russian deceit, corruption, and fraud. A noticeable instance, though it occurred some time ago, is still the talk of Port Arthur, and men take sides and argue fiercely, not about the right or wrong of the whole matter, but merely whether it was good business or not.

The thing occurred in this way. A big American house secured a giant contract for hay. Everything was settled; the hay arrived, the transaction was practically finished when the trouble only began. That is the worst of it where the Russian is concerned—you never know when you are safely out of the wood. The inspectors inspected the hay, fixed their commission among themselves, and sent a duly-authorised deputy to the offices of the big American house to receive the roubles. Imagine his surprise when he was told that the entire transaction was ended, the books closed, and that there was therefore no more money for anybody, not excepting the Czar himself. The duly-authorised deputy stormed; the agent of the big American house remained firm. "All right," said the Russian at last, "we shall see who wins." So he went back and nothing was heard for a day or two. Then a big departmental despatch came saying that as the hay was not up to standard and contained a heavy percentage of dirt, the entire consignment was rejected and delivery could not be taken. What could be done? Nothing at all, for there is no appeal against the Russian Government, since

it can do no wrong; and a loss of £20,000 sterling had to be faced by the contracting firm—a ruinous price even for righteousness.

This sort of thing has been disgusting decent people more and more until the big American house has received orders to close up all its agencies as soon as it can collect its money, and others are rapidly following suit.

But a more interesting and flagrant case, in which the Russian won, has gone down in local history and is worth repeating.

Several thousand tons of Cardiff steam-coal had been bought by the Russian authorities and were being delivered when the senior engineer of the squadron in harbour descended on the managers of the contracting firm: "This coal you are selling the Russian fleet is good, very good, but it has one drawback, it is too cheap," he said.

"Too cheap!" replied the astounded agent, "what do you mean?"

"You are selling for fourteen roubles a ton what is worth eighteen roubles a ton to me. Make out the contracts at the higher price; I will pay you at that rate. Two days after the money is paid over to you, I will call at your office and you will pay me the difference between the original price and the one I have just named. It is my share."

The agent, who was very young, refused point-blank. "All right," said the fleet engineer, "then your good coal is bad now, it will not burn. The Russian fleet does not like it."

The Czar's officer left irately,and the young agent cabled in despair to an older agent for instructions. The older agent finally came himself, and, as his firm could not face the loss of a broken contract, he had to order the younger man to give in. And do you know the supreme argument used by the fleet engineer, and one to which he recurred with parrot-like insistence, probably believing to this day that it won for him? Hauling out a huge gold watch on which was a magnificent Imperial monogram, he cried bitterly in broken English: "I am the friend of the Czar; when he was a young man and Czarewitch, and came out here, he like me and gave me the watch. He is my friend, please pay the money! I am very good, the Czar he like me; please pay me the money!" Have you ever heard of such an argument? On the principle that the King can do no wrong, it was undoubtedly a fixed idea with this officer of the Czar that erstwhile Imperial friends are above ordinary codes—that an Imperial watch is a passport of respectability to all, and that it was miraculous, impossible, absurd that ordinary merchants should not recognise this excellent logic and bow to a well-reasoned decision.

The unsophisticated will have realised what an extraordinary state of affairs prevails in this new-world trade. Americans are apt to talk of the wear and tear of life in American cities. It is nothing to the nervous strain of having business dealings with either Government or private Russians on or along the railway empire in

Manchuria. The prospective profits are, however, so great that the temptation to remain is nearly always too strong. Everyone is always going in for one final coup and then finish and home. Like all unwholesome speculations, the fever finally gains you until it becomes a mania and your departure is postponed from day to day, from month to month, and then from year to year. Everybody is anxious to make a pile rapidly and then to leave the sinking ship before the waves engulf it. Everything is forgotten in the frantic chase after the travelling rouble. Morals are cast to the winds.

Each night you are forced to go and drink champagne amidst sordid surroundings with the smell of top-boots offending your nostrils. You dare not halt a minute, for if you do you will drop out of the running and be known no more. Credit, extended to unlooked-for and dangerous proportions, supports the whole vain fabric and may collapse at any moment. To be seen is to be trusted. When you are not there, who knows what may not happen and what stories will not be circulated? Only fierce wrangles succeed in extorting sums long overdue. The Government will not pay until the very last minute. Private contractors are worse and simply have no hearts at all. As for small merchants, shops, restaurants, and the minor fry, only blows will bring them to reason. All is honeycombed with bribery, corruption, venality, false accounts, and every deceitful thing. Every man is squeezing his neighbour for all he is worth.

Nobody will move until his palm has been greased. Chinese are aghast and ask how it is that their own officials have acquired such a name for squeeze, when in Europe squeezers and renderers-of-false-accounts exist to such an undreamt-of extent.

From very top to very bottom, without exception and without one blush, this state of affairs is to be found in the boasted Russian Far East. Commercial travellers who arrived joyously by rail from Austria, France, and Germany a year or two ago—mostly commercial travellers with hooked noses—and who made contracts right and left with twelve and fifteen months' credit, are dismayed to find that there is little chance of their ever being paid, and trail the streets with downcast looks. Day after day men are "missing"—mysterious disappearances, to find the clue of which you must look for the overdue rouble.

Everybody is hoping that it will come out all right in the long run, and is meanwhile piling on the percentages higher and higher, so that if the crash really does come they will at least have something to the good with which to make their escape.

This, therefore, is a rough sketch of Russia almost down to the warm waters. Since everything is seen in the bright rays of a sun that is scarcely ever clouded over, a moral disorder unparalleled in the history of the Far East is the direct result. The railway, the army, the navy, the commissariat, merchants, traders, shopkeepers, all of them are

mere speculators, speculating with Government funds; inflating credit until it is credit no longer but mere make-believe; each determined that this golden East is going to make his fortune or that he will rot in the attempt. Sell up Government stores, take Government money, do anything so long as the roubles roll in! All are hungry, and a few thousands won merely whet the appetite for countless roubles more. Smooth Hebrews, basking in the sunshine of official favour, have won the most, but there are others. Young men who have little moral stamina are whisked in a few months from the pleasant dream times of youth into pale, overstrained men, their manhood sapped before it has grown mature by excesses thrust on them through force of example, and because they are determined to love Mammon alone. A hundred or even five hundred roubles spent in a night is nothing extraordinary for men whose legitimate incomes scarce exceed three figures in sterling per annum. Do not stop, for he who stops is trampled to death by the eager crowds which surge after.

Meanwhile, the cunning ones are rapidly settling up at any figure. Square-jawed men are losing their determination under the strain, and feign a false gaiety to conceal the fear which gnaws at their hearts. After all, let war come, they think; it is best for you and best for me. Perhaps after the deluge life will be worth living. It certainly is not so at present.

CHAPTER VI

ON THE ROAD TO HARBIN

If you start for Harbin from Port Arthur, you are soon rudely reminded by the railway that you are slighting Dalny—Dalny, the all-ready-built and not-yet occupied; Dalny, the would-be terminus for the trade of a continent. To catch your eleven o'clock European express at Dalny you are forced to leave Port Arthur at half-past seven in the evening, without your dinner, and full of bile and bitterness against the world at large and the Chinese Eastern Railway Company in particular. Hardly have you left your station before your train stops—stops dead, apparently with the idea of remaining there for ever. You wonder whether it is the mythical Hunghutzu at work, or the Japanese war at last. Just as you are getting desperate and contemplate returning to Port Arthur on foot or by trolley, you move on again, slowly, grudgingly, and with much squeaking protest from the wheels and couplings, but still you move on. After an hour or so you stop again in the middle of a valley closed in on all sides by hills that look like giants in the dark.

It is a station of no importance, and you learn you are only stopping to keep up your wonderful average of slowness. Then on again; another step, a short agony of suspense, and finally you reach a junction where the branch line—not the main line, mind you—runs down to Dalny. At last you reach that haven of rest and steam right alongside the home-going express, which looks cheery, well-lighted, and comfortable after your gloomy run in the dark. Above all, it has a dining car, a "wagon-restaurateur" to give it its official name, where you may get all manner of things, somewhat high-priced it is true, but infinitely good to eat after your furtive gnawing of wayside station delicacies.

As all the world now knows, the European express trains leave Dalny twice a week, on Tuesdays and Saturdays, and dump you in Paris or London, if you have any reasonable luck, well inside of eighteen or nineteen days. For fifteen hundred versts you run through Manchuria, see the country through your doubled-glassed windows, and, if you are of that respectable type of manhood, the globe-trotter, you return home with the trite tale that Russia has absorbed Manchuria. Nobody questions your right. Nobody is in the least surprised at what you say, for it is what they have been taught to expect and your statements merely confirm what every man has somehow vaguely thought for himself.

But if any man, after having walked the streets of Canton or Peking and gaped at the sign-boards

and spirit-screens, imagines he has absorbed the classical learning of China, he is speedily taught the error of his ways and is cruelly sat on by one and all. In Manchuria it is different. You see nothing except a railway track and a few dozen stations; talk with nobody except a fellow-traveller from the other end of the world; know nothing about a thousand things of which you should know a great deal to be of any value, and you are acclaimed a heaven-sent news-giver when you reach home. Such is the glamour of the Russian Far East. My tale, however, is different, but that will come in due time.

Sharp on time our train steamed out of the station—a monster Baldwin engine, one first-class car, two second, a dining car, one miscellaneous, ending up with the famous postal car, stuffed full with correspondence in a hurry to get home. There was no difficulty about room or over-crowding, for there were only seven passengers distributed over eighty berths. I thought this exceptional until I struck an American to whom the Chinese Eastern Railway is apparently a perpetual joke as a business undertaking. He assured me that the most he had ever seen on an express train was five and the least three; that he was "in wheat" at Harbin and knew the railway ropes, and that things were evidently booming this trip. But then he was something of a professional joker. The home traveller is correct in at least one thing. The second-class car

On the Arid Plains beyond Newchwang.

provided by the Manchurian Railway is quite equal to the first, and if you can only avoid the pitying stare of the first-class attendants and find a place for yourself alone in the second, it is obviously a waste of money to buy first-class tickets.

All night long we were steaming up the Kuantung peninsula, which is highly uninteresting from a scenic point of view, and is mainly a replica of Shantung province. You find the same sad-looking, treeless hills, the same stony clay soil, and wretched, hungry-looking people; it is deadly dull, so I will not describe it. True Manchuria only begins far north of the leased territory, and is incomparable with the rest.

At seven in the morning we reached Ta-shih-ch'iao, from whence a branch line runs down to Newchwang, twenty versts distant by the railway map. Ta-shih-ch'iao is a junction of the utmost importance, both strategically and commercially, and the Russians have shown their appreciation of the fact in many ways. There you will find railway repair shops, machine shops, an iron foundry, huge locomotive sheds (in which I counted on this occasion thirteen engines), godowns, barracks for a couple of thousand men, and, finally, a heterogeneous collection of houses. Far behind all this you will see the walls of the native city which lives its own life completely separate and far away from the turmoil of the railway.

A year ago, when I stopped at this station, a few miserable Siberian peasant women attempted

unsuccessfully to sell us milk and eggs. To-day they have vanished never to return again, and the Russian has learnt that you cannot colonise where the Chinese thrive. Every inhabitant of the Russian settlements along the railway, both here and elsewhere, owes his existence and his daily bread to the railway and to the soldier, and to them alone. Destroy the railway, or stop its working, and automatically you starve every Slav south of the Amur. For, although the self-same Slav may not be actually a railway servant—indeed, he may be very much the reverse—in point of fact, he is living as a result of Government subsidy and war-scale wages. Think only of the Mesdames Sans-Gêne in Manchuria, and the room they occupy. There must be thousands of them if there is a single one, and everywhere they crowd the streets and towns, jingling their soldier earnings, and represent Russian colonising. Then building is still going on everywhere along the railway, and when you build you require contractors and overseers, and other people to feed and board them, and yet others to provide them with drink and music, for your average Russian is not amused without much noise, and unless he can be both amused and get drunk, he will not work.

In Ta-shih-ch'iao it was very evident that there was much military and other activity. In the event of war, the place will become a point of paramount importance, and although it is useless to hazard an opinion as to what extent it has been fortified, there

can be no doubt that it would only be abandoned after the most desperate fighting.

Once past Ta-shih-ch'iao, you enter the agricultural and strategically important districts containing Hai-ch'êng and Liaoyang. Here begin those vast grain-growing fields which stretch almost unbroken for two thousand li due north, and can provide food and fodder for countless millions of men and animals. Here also run caravan roads north, south, east, and west, in fact, to every point of the compass; but, most important of all, to the promised land of Korea. Invading or defending armies must use this vantage ground whether they will or not, and if the clash of arms is soon to be heard, it is upon this soil that will be fought most desperate engagements.

Hai-ch'êng is but a few dozen miles from Ta-shih-ch'iao. It is a hsien or district city, and is admirably adapted for defence. Low hills surround the four walls of the town, and it was in this neighbourhood that great slaughter was seen in the Chino-Japanese war of 1894-95. Until quite recently the Russians do not appear to have given the place the strategic importance it deserves; but as we steamed into the Hai-ch'êng station, it was evident that they were hastily attempting to make up for lost time. Apart from the permanent brick barracks and buildings, lines of muddy white tents flanked the railway on either side, and regiments of Shantung coolies were engaged in throwing up shacks and makeshifts

sufficiently strong to withstand the rigours of the winter.

It was impossible to make any reliable estimate of the number of men in camp, for figures fluctuate almost daily and accurate calculations become impossible. It is sufficient to say, however, that there are approximately two or three thousand men in and around Hai-ch'êng, and that these numbers can be doubled or trebled in a few hours by drawing on neighbouring forces. It should be noted, however, that every man is well within the thirty-verst railway strip, over which China has by treaty irrevocably conceded to Russia the right of policing without any stipulation.

From Hai-ch'êng there is cheap water communication with the outside world through an affluent of the river Liao. North of Hai-ch'êng you sweep on mile after mile through country which in late autumn is wonderful to the eye. Everywhere is the same cultivation of each foot of fertile soil, and everywhere, as we steamed along, stood giant crops of kaoliang, or the tall millet of the north. To the east were range upon range of hills and mountains, sometimes advancing a little nearer to the railway as if angrily challenging its right to monopolise the soil over which they have watched so long, sometimes receding so far that one's vision confounded the dull grey of mountain peaks with the dazzling blue of the horizon. A bright, clear sunshine flooded the land, and occasionally the sight of great country carts, with teams unyoked and joyously

scampering in the fields, added to the general impression of peace and plenty. What a land flowing with milk and honey is Manchuria, even if there is a winter of terrible cold and blizzards!

Some four hours after leaving Ta-shih-ch'iao we reached Liaoyang. Liaoyang is a walled city famous for its fruits, its samshu, and its industries. It has a population variously estimated at from fifty to a hundred thousand inhabitants, and in Fengtien province it is only second in importance to Moukden, the capital of the province. A lofty pagoda stands like some sentinel outside the city, which is seen indistinctly from the railway through screens of elms, willows, and pine trees. Liaoyang has an ancient and interesting history, to which I have referred elsewhere.

Liaoyang station showed even more military activity than Hai-ch'êng. There were soldiers in tents and soldiers in railway trucks—in fact, soldiers everywhere; and an enthusiastic Russian assured me that there were 15,000 men in all. This was, of course, absurd, and only an example of the monumental and childlike ignorance you find among a people with whom a critical discussion of Governmental or political affairs is generally taboo. The best-informed Chinese state that the Liaoyang figures vary from two to four thousand men and that latterly many have been drawn away to Hai-ch'êng.

A few miles north of Liaoyang you pass a branch line which leads to the Yentai coal mines. These coal mines, which, under good management,

could supply fuel for almost every engine on the Chinese Eastern Railway, have been reduced to a more or less hopeless condition. A few weeks ago all non-Russian engineers, after being for months hampered in their work, were summarily dismissed, and the Russian engineers lost but little time in celebrating this auspicious event by having a first-class fire-damp explosion in which fifty or sixty men were killed or wounded. And yet the Russians are demanding exclusive mining privileges in Manchuria!

Some sixty miles from Liaoyang lies Moukden, the capital of the province. Formerly the railway, after the manner of most Russian railways, made a broad sweep away to the west so as to avoid the city, and it could only be reached after a most tiresome and bumpy journey by cart over fifty or sixty li of assuredly the worst roads in the world. Now, however, they have corrected this, and the new Moukden station is but two miles beyond the city walls. With Moukden itself I shall deal separately later on. At the station there was nothing to see and no garrison beyond a few files of Manchurian railway guards. Somewhat extensive barracks are being erected, however, behind the station, into which perhaps a battalion of men could be squeezed. There was little animation beyond the usual Chinese crowd gazing curiously at the train or shouting wares in pidgin Russian.

From Moukden onwards we jogged at our unvarying express rate of fifteen miles an hour, always

through the same rich and pleasant country. As we got farther north it was not only the usual village or small town that we saw. Sometimes nestled at the foot of a hill and embowered in clumps of willow and elm was to be seen the residence of a vanishing breed, the Manchu country squire or magnate. In the old days even his womenfolk used to go forth mounted on stout ponies and hunt with the hawk or bow and arrow. The iron horse, with its hideous screech, has frightened almost all that away now, and the unromantic but frugal Shantung coolie is completing the destruction of Nurhachu's descendants and their old-world ways.

Every couple of miles or so long stretches of broad Chinese cart roads winding through the country and crossing the railway over level tracks were to be seen. Each approach was carefully staked with stout posts painted grey, and at nearly every crossing stood teams of fettlesome and healthy-looking ponies, harnessed to great country carts stacked mountain-high with kaoliang and wheat. Harvest was beginning.

As the day wore on we passed T'iehling, a town, as the name shows, in the middle of the iron-producing districts. Tall hills were to be seen beyond the city to the far east and still farther on, dim looking mountains stood right up to the horizon line. T'iehling station, as far as my investigations showed me, was but feebly garrisoned and that only by railway guards in the workmanlike green and black uniforms.

As we swept farther north it became more and

more apparent that the great concentration is all south of Moukden, and that for several hundred versts, in fact, say, to Harbin, the railway is practically unprotected.

A couple of hours after T'iehling we drew up at K'ai-yüan, another town of some importance, and again, except for some building at the station, there was no animation.

After a protracted breathing space for our ponderous and infinitely tired engine, we moved on once more with the dignity and slowness which so becomes the Manchurian express. During the eighty miles to K'uan-ch'êng-tzu I saw only two things of interest; one a Tientsin juggler somehow stranded far from home, performing at a little wayside station, and the other a Chinese soldier in full war paint belonging to the vanguard of the K'ai-yüan horse contingent, as his red coat plainly informed one. The latter became justly indignant when I asked him if there were any more like him left in Manchuria, and he assured me that he was one of a faithful band of two hundred "who all had their horses," and that he was travelling back free gratis on the railway after a short furlough.

When I further asked him whether his Kopitan (phonetic for Russian captain) was Russian, he refused to speak and marched off indignantly—to my great grief, as I wished to have his opinion on the evacuation and sundry other things.

The stars were already shining when we reached the station at K'uan-ch'êng-tzu. If you are bound

for Kirin city it is here that you must shoot off your traps and ride or cart it over pretty bad roads. There were large Chinese crowds at the station, all waiting for the trains, for K'uan-ch'êng-tzu is a bustling and important city of a couple of hundred thousand inhabitants, and is, in fact, the greatest Mongolian and Manchurian mart in the north. Strictly speaking, we were no longer in Manchuria but in Mongolia ; for although the district in which K'uan-ch'êng-tzu lies is administered by the Kirin provincial Government, it is really Mongol territory. A few long-coated, bare-pated Mongols strolling about the station emphasised the fact that only a few miles to the west were the rolling grass lands from whence the China pony of virtuous memory is exported in crude condition to the eighteen provinces and beyond.

If you are apt to be irritable over Manchurian railway speed during the day-time, it is not so at night. The gentle rocking of the heavy train and its slow, deliberate manner of stopping and starting is eminently conducive to sound sleep, and so much so in my case that I woke up in the morning to find that we had already crossed the upper bend of the river Sungari and were only three hours from Harbin.

At the first opportunity I got out to stretch my legs, and our engine immediately attracted my attention. Stacks of roughly-chopped logs were piled on the bogie and showed that we were so far north that we had crossed the coal-using line and

were burning wood. Where this line exactly is, it is hard to say, as railway officials are not communicative gentry ; but, roughly speaking, it may be said that out of Fengtien province the Chinese Eastern Railway has to burn wood, and plenty of it. This cannot go on indefinitely, for Chinese dealers have told me since that wood is becoming dearer and dearer and that they have always to go farther and farther afield to draw their supplies. If the Manchurian railway authorities would but hire half-a-dozen Scotch or English engineers, in two years they would have coal to throw at the birds, for there is an abundance of coal to be found everywhere in Manchuria. But instead of this they think only of building super-solid stations at primitive out-of-the-way places, and thus squandering every paper rouble (with a commission bitten out of the edge) that comes into their hands.

Suddenly, as the clock struck a quarter to eleven, and before we knew it, we were entering Harbin, and puffing and panting we drew up proudly, as befits an express that has accomplished over 800 versts, or some 500 miles, in 36 hours.

CHAPTER VII

ON THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT

To the average man, and certainly to anyone who does not know his Far East from the inside, the name of the Russo-Chinese Bank suggests nothing much in itself, and is indeed quite innocuous. Even in places where it actually functions, it is ostensibly a bank established with the philanthropic object of facilitating commercial intercourse between Chinese and Russians—a financial institution concerning itself with the squeezing of big exchange profits out of dealers in roubles and dollars, and nothing else. But, know all you who are not already informed, that this prince of modern and up-to-date banks is divided into two great departments—the financial and the political—and the first somewhat coarsely masks the second, which is the reason-of-being, the leading motive of the whole ingenious creation, and that it is this bank which, more than anything else, is responsible for China's troubles during the past eight years.

Indirectly, the bank may be said to be a manifestation of the Russian's very real admiration for

English success in the Far East, that astonishing success which has attended the spread of Anglo-Saxon trade and ideas under the ægis of England's undisputed naval might.

When Prince Uktomsky toured the East with the then Czarewitch, almost exactly ten years ago, nothing impressed him so much as the results accomplished by Anglo-Saxon energy at those great marts, Hong Kong and Singapore, and in a lesser degree at the China and Japan Treaty ports. All the observations of this great empire-builder were carefully noted down, and after he returned to Russia, time only was needed to see his ideas take practicable shape. Uktomsky fully realised that unless Russia took early steps to combat the rapidly-growing influence of Englishmen and English ideas, propagated, not by Government help, but indeed rather against the Downing Street wishes, the Far East in a few short decades would be so saturated with Anglo-Saxon methods, ideas, and standards that no other culture or power could hope for success. Speedy action was therefore necessary, and speedy action soon came.

The Chino-Japanese war interrupted the immediate prosecution of Uktomsky's schemes, but no sooner was that far-reaching little war ended than the Russian bugles rang out clearly for such as had ears to hear. The message of those bugles is told in the eventful years of 1895 and 1896. I have already elsewhere discussed in detail some features of these years, but others have yet to be

told. What diplomacy can effect has never been more brilliantly demonstrated than in those times. 1895 should have been a glorious year for one Power alone in the Far East—Japan; instead of this, Russian diplomacy converted Japan's victory, which was such a terrible menace to all St. Petersburg's expansionist schemes, into a Russian paper success, and left the Island Empire, though its martial spirit was still throbbing with exultation, at heart solely alarmed by the unexpected turn of affairs.

Two names must be writ large on the Chinese canvas of '95—those of Cassini and Uktomsky. These two men did more than any others to set the snowball rolling down from bitter Siberia on to China—a snowball that at this very moment terrifies all, onlookers and the men who launched it alike, with the hidden possibilities of the future. Cassini, the Russian Minister at Peking, began in that year those plottings and coquettings with sorely-offended Chinese and Manchu officials which are responsible for the apocryphal Cassini Convention; and, in December of the same year, Uktomsky organised the great politico-financial Russo-Chinese Bank and secured his Imperial master's consent to the prosecution of numberless schemes, which embraced the ultimate destruction of China, and the reduction of Japan to the rank of a secondary Power. And so successfully were Uktomsky's ideas carried out that the Russo-Chinese Bank, nominally with a capital of but

fifteen million roubles, or roughly a million and a half sterling, has in eight years done more in the Far East than the British Government in half a century; has secured vast concessions; and has opened fifty branches in widely different places which stand like the points of cavalry patrols from Central Asia to the sea of Japan, showing observers the vastness of Russian aspirations; for where those points are, one day will the Russian tricolour be hoisted.

Brutally put, the Russo-Chinese Bank is merely the weapon forged by Uktomsky to assimilate China, which, by elevating Russia to the proud position of the arbiter of Eastern and Central Asia, is to reduce automatically all the other Powers, but more especially England and Japan, to positions of secondary importance.

The task which confronted the promoters of this political concern when it was launched on the world was no mean one, for there were enormous odds to be fought against; and it is only fair to acknowledge that the greatest diplomacy and generalship of the intriguing sort were shown from the very moment of its official birth. At first it was made to appear that Petersburg capitalists were disinclined to find the necessary money to insure a successful flotation of the Bank (although no flotation was really necessary); and consequently that continental Europe had to come to the rescue. This was a most clever move, for as soon as Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam and other great centres were

financially interested in the success of the business part of the venture, the sympathies of Europe could be counted on; and Russia relies greatly on continental sympathy. The fifteen millions were very easily found—were indeed many times over-subscribed when they were called for; and on the eventful 10th of December, 1895, an Imperial Ukase, launched from St. Petersburg, announced the organisation of the Bank. The words "organised under Imperial Decree" which are used by the Bank, are practically the only true and open ones it has ever spoken, for they most aptly describe what was actually done, and hint at the secret arrangements between Government and financiers which were undoubtedly made. The promoters of the Russo-Chinese Bank borrowed the idea of their institution directly from the well-known Chinese model: for in China big undertakings of modern date are nearly always semi-official and are directly supervised by the Central Government. In China, as soon as a brilliant idea germinates in the brain of a yellow genius and is approved of by the powers that be, officials are appointed to organise the undertaking planned, while contributions are invited from the mercantile classes; then, when the capital needed is fully subscribed, the shareholders or bondholders appoint representatives to look after their own interests and to secure that a fair share of the profits accrue to them, whilst the actual management remains in the hands of Government officials. The profits earned are largely possible

because the Government is directly interested in the welfare of the undertaking and therefore gives it something in the character of a monopoly.

In the case of the Russo-Chinese Bank, a similar procedure was adopted. The Petersburg Government had vast plans in its portfolios, and needed a convenient covering both to mask them and to make them feasible. That covering was provided by the genius of an Uktomsky and his brilliant lieutenants, and other men were not found wanting to work out the minor details. Once the Russo-Chinese Bank was floated—if such a term can be applied to a Government concern—it was necessary to have an efficient working plan, and no time was wasted in finding that plan. It was decided that in each branch of the Bank, beginning with the head office in St. Petersburg, and ending with the most insignificant outpost-bank, there were to be two departments—one concerned with actual banking and the guarding of the interests of the *bona fide* shareholders, the second with the winning of political influence by the obtaining of so-called concessions in mining, railways, lumbering, and any other field which suggested itself to the fertile brains of the directors.

The whole undertaking was soon crowned with success, for the Russian Government can, and does, find brilliant agents to carry into execution its projects of world-empire.

The very first thing the bank had to do was to turn its attention to Manchuria. The results of the

Chino-Japanese war had given a terrible shock to the astute gentlemen who dwell on the banks of the Neva. Relying on their agents in the Far East, they had supposed that China would inevitably defeat Japan; and when the reverse occurred, and it seemed as if the Island Empire was about to close the roads down to the Yellow Sea by the seizure of the Liaotung, Russian bureaucrats were aghast, and lost no time in organising the triplicate of powers which forced the retrocession of the peninsula on Japan. The rapidity with which this was effected is astonishing when one remembers with what slowness diplomatic *pourparlers* generally proceed. The Shimonoseki Treaty of Peace was signed on the 17th April, 1895; the ratifications were exchanged on the 8th May, and only two days after this ratification a Japanese proclamation was issued stating that Japan was prepared to return the ceded Liaotung territory to China owing to the friendly representations of neighbouring powers. Russia's terror is plainly shown by this haste to restore the *status quo ante*, and it is interesting to recall that when Li Hung Chang, the Chinese Plenipotentiary, was demurring about signing away Chinese territory, Colonel Wogack, the Russian confidential agent, arrived at Shimonoseki and told him to put his signature without fear to any instrument he liked, as Russia was coming to the rescue.

These things hastened the work of the Russo-Chinese Bank, and by September, 1896, nine

months after its official birth, this political weapon secured the concession for building the trans-Manchurian railway, and the Manchurian question had been opened, although English statesmen remained incredulous.

The Russian Government was fortunate in having a most redoubtable agent in the Bank in Peking, the great Monsieur Pokotilow, through whose untiring efforts so much has been done, and the bulk of the far-reaching railway concessions arranged. When he arrived in Peking in the early days of 1896, he was a young man in the thirties. When he left the scene of his activity in 1903, seven years' work had given him a bent and broken appearance, and strangers supposed him to be a man of sixty. In this manner do Russian agents work.

The first concession obtained by the Bank was but the prelude to a second, to a third, and then to many others; for the chief idea of the planned Russian conquest was to envelop China and her outlying territories with a strategic network of railways, which would choke the officials and people to death as soon as it was deemed prudent to throw off the thin disguise. The second concession, tied up in a single clause of the Port Arthur leasing agreement, was even more important than the first. To arrange the final details, Prince Uktomsky himself visited Peking in 1897, and brought verbal instructions to the Russian Chargé d'Affaires, M. Pavlow, and the Bank manager, Pokotilow. Prince Uktomsky's diplomacy had already succeeded in persuading

Mr. Victor von Grot to join the Bank and proceed to Mongolia, where he was to become the commander of the line of advanced posts which were being established. Mr. von Grot was a splendid acquisition. But thirty-three years of age, trained for ten years under Sir Robert Hart, he had given unmistakable signs of extraordinary ability, and was therefore a marked man to the Russians. He was accounted in Peking *facile princeps* in the difficult art of Chinese despatch writing, and was one of those curious men to whom work is the reason of existence, and recreation an unknown thing. But he had an even more important accomplishment. He possessed a complete knowledge of the mysterious Peking world, and had been so closely concerned with the preparation of documents of great value, for several years previous to his enlistment in the service of the Russo-Chinese Bank, that he thoroughly understood the local atmosphere and the working of all the many political levers. And it is significant that, only a few months before his resignation from Sir Robert Hart's service, he had translated an exhaustive memorandum for the Chinese Government, containing remedial suggestions under every head, calculated to prevent a recurrence of disasters similar to those of the years '94—'95.

Five months after Prince Uktomsky's visit to Peking the Russian cruisers steamed into Port Arthur, and a few weeks after this the famous leasing agreement was openly signed. In article 8, the Chinese Eastern Railway was soberly given the

right to build the Central Manchurian Railway, and connect the leased territory with the trans-Manchurian section. No sooner was the agreement signed than another crop of agencies sprang up in Manchuria; after a brief spell, others were opened in Mongolia and Eastern Turkestan, and by 1900 the Bank had reached the high-water mark of prosperity.

Meanwhile, the shareholders who had supplied the initial capital, and through whose efforts further funds were obtained in the shape of loans to carry into execution the various concessions obtained by the Bank, were not disappointed with their investment. The Bank profits of the purely business side of this hybrid institution, in spite of bad and unscrupulous methods, were large, and big dividends therefore possible. Bonuses and private "chances" were likewise given to the big shareholders, mainly continental banks, and everything done to satisfy the worshippers of Mammon. All seemed rose-coloured, and still further profits possible, when 1900 interrupted the triumphant march. But 1900 only meant a temporary set-back, and as soon as things began to settle down again the greatest efforts were made to extend the field of the Bank's operations in Manchuria. By 1901 there were ten branches in the three eastern provinces, and the leased territory and many others were planned. There can be no doubt that at the beginning of 1900 there was a great deal of talk concerning the advisability of directly taking over

the Manchurian finances and ousting the Chinese officials. But the lack of trained men, the opposition of all classes of the native population, and the vastness of the undertaking, made the directors hesitate. Fortunately for them, the signature of the Evacuation Protocol of April, 1902, demanded an indefinite postponement. Had the Russian Government decided to embark on this doubtful policy, a fresh rebellion in Manchuria would have been a foregone conclusion, and the country devastated far and wide.

But although the political department of the Bank was constantly urging the establishment of more branches and a general opening out in Manchuria on a far more extensive scale, the business managers were not sufficiently convinced of the financial stability of a concern which was something of a banking abortion, and on their refusing to agree to this, an internecine war began. The heavy interest and discount rates charged by the Bank where it held a monopoly allowed profits to be made, but those profits were "ragged"—were always too big or too small—and did not read well in the half-yearly returns. Some branches in Manchuria steadily lost money and only showed a credit in their balance-sheets by an inadmissible juggling of figures; one branch even had to be closed; and other offices, for instance, the Port Arthur and Harbin branches, made too much money to suit the Government. At Newchwang the impounding of Customs revenues allowed a juggling in

silver, which was vastly profitable, but this was only a temporary profit. As time went on, the considerable internal friction I have spoken of became more and more evident, and it seems useful to explain the curious recruiting which takes place of the Bank's personnel and the rivalry which must result from such a system.

Two separate and distinct bodies are empowered to appoint representatives and employés. The first is, of course, the Ministry of Finance in St. Petersburg. In all the Bank's important branches this Ministry is represented by carefully selected men who are in direct communication with the Russian Government. The exact extent of their powers it is, of course, impossible to gauge, but there seems some reason to believe that they practically control the Bank's general line of action and policy at the posts at which they are stationed, and rank above the purely business managers. They do not interfere with the routine work of banking, but the general funds are controlled by them, and they keep a jealous eye over everybody. It would also seem that in places that are looked upon as already "captured," for instance, in Manchuria and Mongolia (although this capture is a mere myth), the St. Petersburg Ministry of Finance takes over charge from the business representatives and attempts to have only its own nominees in such offices.

The second body which appoints the men to carry on the ordinary banking work is the special

committee of shareholding banks sitting at Paris. Continentals of all nationalities are selected by this committee, having apparently due regard to two things—ignorance of banking methods and a partiality to Hebrews. It is commonly reported that numbers of clerks employed have quite elementary ideas on the subject of accounting, and that books are kept in a manner which would be deemed highly suspicious in a common-place English bank. But in spite of all that has been done in every department of the Bank's business, the French aphorism is amply demonstrated, that, whilst genius creates ideas, hard work alone brings them to a successful conclusion. Genius there has been in plenty from the very beginning of the Bank's short history, but hard work, except by your Pokotilows and von Grots, has been conspicuous by its absence. And one of the unfortunate results of too much genius is the almost certain absence of routine and system—the jumping straight from an idea to its conclusion without a substantial structure being built beneath to support it—and the leaving to a few men what should be understood by many dozens.

In Manchuria it would seem at first sight that a portion of Uktomsky's idea in creating the Bank has been realised—that Manchuria is lost to the world and gained for Russia. But probing beneath the surface shows one at once that empire-builders should employ capable architects to see that foundations are not sunk in sand, and that although what has been created by the Bank—the Chinese

Eastern Railway with its hundred solid stations, impregnable Port Arthur, bustling Harbin—is very striking to the eye, there is something unnatural in the whole thing, some curious setting aside of inexorable laws which must lead to trouble and an eventual toppling over.

CHAPTER VIII

HARBIN THE RAILWAY CITY

All the world knows of the mushroom growth of Harbin. Hardly six years ago, two railway engineers, mounted on Siberian ponies, ambled down to the solitary Chinese distillery on the banks of the Sungari and pitched their tents. To the west of them the Hsing-an Mountains offered such formidable engineering difficulties that railway construction and movement of materials were impossible without a base nearer than the far-away Siberian frontier. To the East, with the exception of a few rolling plains, it was the same story. So the site near the broad Sungari was chosen from whence to begin operations, for the Sungari flows calmly into the Amur a few hundred miles away to the north. Stern-wheelers could thus tug barges laden with materials from the Siberian sea-board right into the heart of Manchuria, and so lighten the construction work enormously.

Unfortunately for the Russians the Sungari happened to be in flood at the time of the founding of Harbin, and no less unfortunately the railway

engineers did not happen to notice it. Old Harbin was therefore built with lavish expenditure, the railway was pushed forward with ferocious rapidity, and it was not until some time had passed that the engineers discovered that the Sungari was a good many miles away from their budding city. This at least was the semi-official explanation which I was given on the day of my arrival, accounting for the existence of two distinct and separate towns, known as Old and New Harbin respectively, in a place, as I have already said, hardly six years old. Then there is a settlement which I promptly labelled Rational Harbin, of which I shall speak later on.

The station of Harbin presented the most astonishing and bewildering activity the day we arrived. Dense crowds jostled one another, and shouted and cursed and laughed. Shantung and Chihli workmen coming and going formed the vast majority of this motley and odoriferous human concourse, but there was no lack of other varieties. Mongolian horse-dealers with long coats, rough top-boots, and queueless heads gazed dog-like at the puffing engines. Yellow-clad lama priests rolled strings of beads in their hands and muttered, possibly prayers, but most probably curses, on the heads of the lusty Chinese railway police, who, clad in semi-Chinese soldier attire, wielded unmercifully heavy sticks on all who did not keep moving. Buriat cavalrymen, with high Mongol cheek-bones and a purely Chinese aspect, swaggered about in their Russian uniforms. Red-turbaned Sikhs from down-town stores and

godowns chanted Hindustani at one another; and Russian officers of every grade and size ran about looking for their wives or belongings, saluting and clicking their spurs endlessly at one another.

Inside the station rooms and restaurants it was even worse. The crush was so great that at times one became hopelessly tied up in men, women, and children, and could not move for minutes. It was a Thursday, and expresses had arrived from three directions, south, east and west, and a number of ordinary trains were about to start. Harbin was trying hard to keep up its reputation of a railway centre, and was succeeding admirably as far as I was personally concerned.

I looked hard to see some of the true, genuine Siberian emigrants, with whom the papers say Manchuria is shortly to be peopled, but not an emigrant was there anywhere. All were of the middle or lower classes, city birds unmistakably, such as they are here, and my friends who met me at the station were mildly amused when I asked to be enlightened. "They are all store-keepers, workmen or mechanics," they explained; "no peasants come here." So, *sans* what I was looking for, I was forced to stow my vile body amidst my luggage in a more or less dangerous drosky.

Before I could speak we were galloping towards Rational Harbin at break-neck speed. I asked not a question, for I am somewhat tongue-tied in Russian, and it is wisest not to speak when your words are few. I was able to observe that the

horses were worse than the horses of Port Arthur, that my trap was number 500 and something, proving that droskies are more numerous here than in the naval port, and finally, that my istvoschick was clad in cast-off civilian clothes, and not elegant, as he is at vice-regal headquarters, in long blue coat, red sash, and white cap.

To the right of the station, as you drove towards the Sungari, the new town was rising or had risen. Conspicuous amongst all the new buildings were two as yet hardly completed—one the railway administration headquarters, and the other the new railway hotel. Both are enormous masses of red-brick and stone, and tower above the hosts of smaller buildings stretching in every direction. Everywhere building is going on; every place is crowded with Chinese workmen. Meanwhile we were driving rapidly over roads that compare unfavourably with those of Peking. What carriage springs are made of by Russian and Siberian builders, I would dearly love to know, for a drop of a foot or two into a rut while you are going at some twelve miles an hour, which violently slams the body of the drosky down on to the axle-bars, is simply nothing, and merely leaves your istvoschick delighted and calling for more. Clouds of black dust are raised by yourself and everything that passes you, for the roads are simply broad tracks of original Manchurian soil, uncorrupted by metalling or doctoring of any sort.

Half a mile from the station you cross the

railway over a rough wooden bridge a couple of hundred feet along. Underneath runs the railway track, or rather many railway tracks, through the usual enormous open-cut. This insensate love for open-cuts seems to be common to all Russian engineers. They will never tunnel if they can possibly help it, but always open-cut, even when they are dealing with hills or mountains.

It must be some two or three miles from the railway station (which, by the way, is a purely temporary structure) to riverine or Rational Harbin. After you have passed the railway bridge you cross a desolate waste, mostly decorated with empty tin cans and inartistic rubbish. Then you come to the streets, such as they are. First, very dirty small houses and shops which had two-foot broad wooden pavements covering up a prehistoric system of surface drainage. Then better streets with bigger houses, cleaner people and less Chinese. Finally, you reach the most civilised part, with good shops, much building going on, and the Sungari a few hundred yards off.

This, however, is not a portion of New Harbin, although it is only half-built. It is a purely unauthorised version of the town, for the Government has decreed just where New Harbin shall be, and nowhere else. However, commercial and other interests are more powerful than any government, and the man who has any sense will continue to buy land near the river, where, as in China, will always be the scene of activity.

The name of my hotel (save the mark!) I will not divulge, for my hosts were passing good people, and I am about to damn their beds and rooms more unutterably than anything has ever been damned before. That bed I slept on, what tender memories it left, both mentally and corporally! It had the outward aspect of the latter-day mattress, but the inward and actual virtues of the stone-age couch. It was harmless to the eye, but not so to the touch. Innocently snuffing my candle too soon at night, I stretched out my hand and struck the bed. Result, one broken finger nail and many severely wounded. So do not trifle lightly with the Harbin mattress; it is capable not only of assuming a defensive attitude, but one of absolute offence. It will be a potent factor in the coming Japanese war—if it comes. Others have often described the horrors of Russian beds, but those in Manchuria have to be seen to be believed. There is, I feel certain, nothing like them in the whole world. And then the rooms! One jerry-built box, twelve feet by ten; very soiled furniture, an unspeakable strip of carpet, a tin basin, one chair, and an atmosphere resulting from the windows remaining shut ever since the house was built. Also, mentally add a stream of unclean persons who have peopled that room incessantly without its having been swept for four years! After this you will do well not to stop in Harbin until the railway hotel is built.

The midday dinner ended, I chatted with mine host. He was communicative and gloomy. Dull

times and many bad debts were, he alleged, his present portion in life. In the old days in Harbin —this means two or three years ago—the profits were great and rapid, but now everyone was hard up and money very tight. Government officials were getting timorous about their accounts ; people were building their own houses ; and altogether he was indignant with kind Providence. "The Chinese," he said, "have got all the money. We have been spending millions, hundreds of millions, and what have we got for it in return ?" What, indeed ? But it is at least a hopeful sign when people, and Russian people at that, start asking such a pregnant question at such a time as this.

Presently I drove out to see the flour-mills. The greatest of these is the Sungari mill, which has a capacity of 2,500 poods a day, or say roughly, 100,000 pounds of flour turned out every twenty-four hours. There are four mills working at the present moment, and they work without stopping from one end of the month to the other. Nearly all of them are practically on the river banks, and are fitted with the latest American or European machinery. Several others are going up, and by 1904 Harbin will be turning out nearly a million pounds of flour a day. What interested me most was the little pioneer mill of the place now closed down, weary from nearly five years' incessant work. This mill was put up in fear and trembling by cautious and not over-rich speculators soon after the first sods of the railway had been cut. It cost but

12,000 roubles, or £1,200. It was worked night and day until it could work no more, and it had such a dazzling success that from its profits many acres of priceless riverine land have been bought and paid for, a new mill with a capacity of half a million bags yearly erected, warehouses, staff buildings and quarters built, and finally several hundred per cent. in dividends distributed.

Of course, after this a host of imitators have sprung up, but these must be content with sound business profits and nothing else. Manchurian grain five years ago cost twenty-five kopecks a pood, to-day it costs sixty-five, a rise of over 150 per cent., and it is still rising. At any rate, I can vouch for the purity of Harbin flour. The miller makes four grades, two for exacting Europeans and two for less discerning Chinese. I ate my dinner at the back of a mill, and I can almost truthfully say I dined off bread. What bread! It is so sweet and pure and light that you can eat on for ever, blessing the generous soil which can grow such crops. If the railway would only learn sense and forget that it is a strategic line, all the Far East might eat of this finest of flour, and suffer less from dyspepsia. An American in Harbin assured me that the Harbin mills were producing stuff superior to American winter wheat flour—and he added that he held no Manchurian mill shares. He was, for the time being, "travelling in champagne"—the best of all things to travel in along the railway empire.

The Sungari and Harbin in Winter.

On the Sungari.

As I was so close to the river-bank, I proceeded to explore the Sungari in a mild sense. When I said that the mill properties abut on the river, I was guilty of an inaccuracy. I perceived that there was a narrow strip running all along the Harbin bank reserved for the railway. A huge earthen embankment had been raised here which serves a double purpose—that of penning in the river during flood time, and of providing track-room for a double line of rails.

From the top of this rampart the view was splendid. To the north, distant half a mile or so, the great Sungari railway bridge rears itself commandingly above the level of the surrounding country, a monument to the good work the Russian can do when he for once forgets the paper rouble. Massive piers of granite masonry, looking snow white against the muddy waters of the river, support span after span of huge iron girders painted a clean chasseur grey, and a train rumbling over this engineering triumph with a distant screech looked by comparison like some puny worm wriggling rapidly away, ashamed of its diminutive size.

On the river itself crowds of shallow-draft stern-wheelers, flying the railway or the Russian flag, lay moored side by side with still more numerous junks. The junks were choked with grain or firewood, and the steamers with cargoes of sawn timber and Russian stores. Crowds of coolies ran down the embankment and returned groaning and panting,

laden with staggering weights. Below the embankment, on the town side, mountain upon mountain of firewood and lumber was being stacked, for winter was approaching rapidly, and in three weeks the river would be frozen to a depth of several feet, and all water communication interrupted for nearly half a year. In the flour-mill yards, carts could be seen discharging cargo after cargo of Manchurian grain, two or three tons at a time, and galloping off for more. Scores of men and boys were breaking open the hempen bags as fast as they could and pouring the contents into those enormous mat-made receptacles built up gradually from the bottom, such as the Chinese store grain in all over China. The mills are greedy monsters, and such is the local demand for flour that buyers literally fight with one another at the very gates, contesting for the privilege of purchasing with all the vigour of American wheat pit operators. From the embankment Harbin stretches out before you like some lumbering, careless monster in patch-work clothes, and you wonder what would happen to the world were the men who bred this giant to acquire the capacity for orderly organisation which is now so conspicuous by its absence.

Turning to have one last look at the river, I counted the steamers; twenty-seven were lying moored to the banks and ever so many more were puffing up and down stream. The junks were an impossible task, so I returned to my carriage. We whipped on towards old Harbin and once more I

marvelled at the springs. Tell, oh, tell, the secret of the steel process which gives birth to such toughness!

Soon we left the streets of Rational Harbin, where grammaphones and diamond necklaces are sold next door to pauper volka-booths, and passing through unfinished miles of the new town, we reached the open plains.

Away in the distance I descried the abandoned city. An hour's jolting and we were there. It was not an inspiriting sight, for the similarity between dead men and dead houses is too marked for it to be pleasant. Old Harbin is, however, not quite dead, for there are apparently still a few luckless inhabitants left, but in a year or two it will have rotted away and will be known no more. As I returned, we passed a regiment of Siberian infantry-men marching steadily with their long, slow stride and singing lustily some song of their plains, company after company taking up the refrain and chanting it back with admirable voice and rhythm. No man in the world can sing like the Russian soldier, and his choruses have a curious sad note in them all, even when they are of victory and the confounding of all the enemies of the Czar; a sadness which makes everyone pause for a moment and think old memories and of days gone by. Even the Chinaman stops his foolish talk when he hears the singing, and looks with big open eyes. Has it perhaps struck some chord, the existence of which he has never suspected? or is he

merely calculating how much rice it takes to make men sing so lustily?

So I returned to Harbin, thoughtful and a little sad. Who is to conquer in the climax of national anger, hatred, and greed, which must come some day and tear this fair country? Harbin is in the very centre of Manchuria, and, being the key of many hundred versts of railway, and the brain which orders the coming and going of every truck and waggon, it, even more than Port Arthur, is a place which will be reached for at all costs by the enemy. Its downfall would be the Sedan of Russian Far Eastern dreams, and even the Russian officer allows that the open plains which surround it can never be adequately fortified.

To-day it has a Russian civilian population of nearly thirty thousand, inhabiting a vast scattered mass of houses rather than any organic city. In five years' time, over two hundred and fifty thousand Chinese have congregated here, and although many are migratory birds who go south to Shantung with the cold weather, they were all there for the summer census, and must be taken into account. Harbin has flour-mills, and saw-mills, and brick kilns. It is Russia's distributing centre for her troops, her provisions, her ambitions, and her canards. Inside of Harbin you feel that Russia has captured Manchuria; once outside you know that this is but an idle dream. Twenty millions of Chinese surround it on all sides. Twenty millions

are waiting with Oriental indifference, and are meanwhile garnering in all Russia's gold.

This is Harbin of to-day, Harbin while there is still peace in the land. Let war be but declared, and all will be changed. Your Chinese will disappear, conjured away as if by magic; Russian men, women, and children will float down the Sungari once more on giant rafts and lighters as they did in 1900, fleeing the Boxer wrath. Harbin will be deserted, its houses abandoned just as they stand. Harbin knows this, and thinks this anxiously and daily in its secret heart. Russian Manchuria is something of a myth made possible by gigantic bluff. It is a remnant of 1900 and China under foreign occupation. Even if there is no force used, Chinese ingenuity alone may push the Russian back to the Amur.

CHAPTER IX

MINING AND LUMBERING IN MANCHURIA

STARTLING stories have from time to time found their way into print describing the results which Russian enterprise has already succeeded in accomplishing in mining and lumbering in Manchuria, stories sometimes even supported by so-called circumstantial evidence; but in spite of all this, careful investigation reveals a very different state of affairs.

Briefly, very little of value has been actually done by any Russian company in Manchuria, and for the major part things are as nebulous and as vague as everything else about which I have written, or am about to write. An exception must be made in the case of gold-mining in the Kuantung territory, to which I shall refer in due course; and so delighted are the Russians with the feeble results accomplished in the leased territory, that they already speak of the advisability of establishing a Mining Board to control this great industry.

Before the Russians came to Manchuria, the Chinese Government was itself the biggest mining corporation in the Three Eastern Provinces. The

plan on which the Peking Government worked was as follows. A territorial or other official would report that a certain district was reputed rich in mineral deposits. On his petition being handed in, the Governor of the province sent it on under a covering despatch to Peking, praying for Imperial sanction to *ts' ou ku*, or invite share subscription from the trading classes, so that exploitation might take place. Immediately an Imperial rescript was received, sanctioning the undertaking; by a system of active canvassing, shares were taken up by wealthy merchants, and capital, which might range anywhere from £10,000 to £100,000, was collected. The company organised on this basis was one of those curious concerns which had no counterpart in Europe until the creation of the Russo-Chinese Bank. Although the capital subscribed was private money, the management was distinctly official, and specially detached officers were employed, protected by strong guards of soldiers, to carry on the actual working of mines opened. Each year a regular sum was set aside for the interest account, and the balance, after the soldiers had been paid and the numberless local officials' demands satisfied, was handed over to the Central Government. From the fact that the interest usually paid remained the same, no matter what the mine profits might be, it appears correct to describe the certificates issued to the subscribing gentry, in exchange for capital supplied, as bonds rather than share-warrants.

The most important gold-mine in Manchuria is

the Moho mine, on the upper Amur. This mine is situated in the same regions as those once exploited by the so-called Republic of Sholtoga, and is not far from Albazin. The last time the "republic" was wiped out was in 1889, and the reason was not so much Chinese official indignation at this invasion of Chinese territory, as the fact that the Moho mines could not be satisfactorily worked with a community of freebooters in their vicinity. The Sholtoga Brotherhood paid very high wages to the Chinese workmen whom they so badly needed to help in their mining work, and protected them by a regular system of fortifications. Consequently, the Moho mine management had great difficulties in retaining the labourers they recruited in Southern Manchuria; and Li Hung Chang, who was associated with the Moho mines, and actually oversaw their working for a time, determined to exterminate the unauthorised promoters of rival enterprises; and a little effort on his part succeeded in accomplishing that result.

The actual amount of gold annually extracted at Moho is quite impossible to ascertain; but, until quite recently, there were several thousand workmen employed there, guarded by a thousand infantry and cavalry, all of which points to a very large production. Chinese shareholders or bondholders have told me that since 1900 there have been no dividends, and that it was believed that, previous to that date, the average annual output was valued at two million taels, or a quarter of a million sterling.

North of Tsitsihar, along the valleys of the upper Nonni, there were also a number of semi-official mining camps, and in Kirin province, near Sansing, two more semi-official mines. The deposits worked were all dry alluvial, and the methods employed very primitive. In Fengtien there were likewise a number of semi-official ventures in the districts of T'ung-hua and Huai-jen, near the Yalu, but these were abandoned some years ago, and the rights acquired by a British firm at Newchwang. Again, north of Moukden, there were at various times many thousands of men employed in gold-washing on a ticket system, and previous to the Japanese war there was also a good deal of digging in the Kuantung territory. But, apart from all these semi-official enterprises started in the manner I have described, there have always been numbers of private mines in Manchuria; and these, again, have been exceeded by the many groups of illicit gold-washing communities to be found in many of the gold-bearing valleys. The export of gold through the Newchwang Customs has sometimes reached several million taels in a single year, and the precious metal which finds its way out of the country in this manner only represents a very small part of the actual amount won. China is reputed to produce two millions sterling a year of gold, and practically all comes from Manchuria. Since 1900, however, most of the official gold mining has stopped, but the extracting of iron ores near Tiehling has continued uninterrupted, and recommence-

ment on the Government gold mines is daily expected.

The Russians, when they entered the country in force in 1900, were fully aware of the mineral wealth of Manchuria; in fact, they were so much aware of it that they grossly exaggerated all reports received from prospecting parties, and painted the country in their letters to their friends and relatives as a veritable Golconda, where all might become rich with but little work.

The first result of this was the influx of numbers of Siberians from the Russian Government mines on the other side of the Amur—men who expected to pick up nuggets in every river-bed. Parties explored some of the country adjoining the Amur and a portion of Kirin province, but although they brought in many samples of gold-bearing rock with beads of free gold to show the sceptical, not one of them became rich, or could even survive a few months' expenses.

The next people to take up the search, when the first were exhausted, were richer individuals, who sought to locate deposits, and then obtain Chinese official sanction in the shape of permits, granting sole mining rights over extensive areas before sinking any capital or beginning work. The best known "concession" of this class has been derisively nicknamed the "Grand Dukes' Concession," and covers about twenty thousand square miles of Kirin province, and is held in the name of the two Grand Dukes who are interested financially in the Chinese

Eastern Railway. It is an undoubted fact that the Kirin military Governor granted a provisional permit a couple of years ago, allowing prospecting to be undertaken within this area; but he did so with the full knowledge that his permit was useless without the Imperial seal. In spite of this, however, the Grand Ducal agents have not made much use of their opportunities, and nothing has been done except perhaps a little timber-felling. The Russians in Manchuria allege that a mining concession also confers the right to fell timber, and so timber is felled to a moderate extent. But although timber-felling should be controlled in Manchuria by the Chinese territorial officials, as a matter of fact, any one who undertakes it on a small scale, and pays the recognised squeeze, is allowed to do so without interference, for the eastern forests of Manchuria have enough wood to last for centuries, and the Russian action is therefore without significance.

Apart from this one concession, there appears to be no one else in Manchuria who has even nominal gold-mining rights. I am told that notwithstanding this, some small works have been started near Sansing, but they are quite without importance. In the extreme north, owing to the abnormal winter, a considerable outlay is necessary before any results can be obtained, and there are no Russians who are foolish enough to do this until the political horizon is vastly different.

In the Kuantung territory a little progress has been made, and there are actually two gold mines

where crushing has commenced. These are the "Austra" mine, which has a twenty stamp mill with ores running two ounces to the ton, and the "Marco Polo" near Port Arthur. In neither case, however, is sufficient capital available to allow of proper development, and the results so far obtained are very poor.

Turning from gold to coal, it is much the same story. Along the thirty verst railway strip within which coal mining is permissible, there are extensive coal basins in Southern Manchuria. The Yentai coal mines, north of Liaoyang, should by this time be raising quantities of coal, but bad management is responsible for a complete failure. These mines were worked by Chinese previous to the coming of the Russians, and have been acquired by purchase by the Chinese Eastern Railway. They lie in the centre of an enormous coal-basin, probably covering several thousand square miles of country, and sufficient to supply the country with fuel for centuries.

North of Moukden there is another coal mine in the Fushun district, and in Southern Liaotung, a third one at Wa-fang-tien. All these mines should be raising quantities of coal, for they were opened up years ago by Chinese, and a great deal of tunnelling done. As a matter of fact, the coal raised is insufficient to supply even the southern section of the Central Manchurian Railway. The Yentai output sometimes reaches the fine total of 100 tons a day; Wa-fang-tien fifty tons, and Fushun practically nothing. Apart from these three mines, other seams have

been worked in an aimless and shiftless fashion by the same owners, the Chinese Eastern Railway, and then abandoned for want of competent people to direct the opening-up. The Russians seem incapable of coping with such difficulties as water and subterranean fires, and hopelessly give things up as impossible immediately they encounter anything but the very plainest sailing.

The two Kuantung gold mines and the three Fengtien coal mines are therefore the only mines which are being even nominally exploited in the whole of Manchuria, for the Sansing venture is too insignificant to be seriously spoken of. The Russo-Chinese Bank has had such bitter experiences in Mongolia that it is unwilling to finance even semi-Government ventures in Manchuria except under direct orders from headquarters; and apart from the Russo-Chinese Bank, a few foreign commercial houses in Port Arthur, and the Harbin mill-owners, there is no one with any capital worth talking about along the railway empire.

It is interesting at this point to remember that Mr. Alexander Ular has supplied a leading London review with details concerning the conquest of Mongolia by gold-mining concessions obtained through the agency of Mr. Victor von Grot and the Russo-Chinese Bank. There happen to be in Port Arthur and Harbin several men who were employed on these Mongolian concessions, and in spite of Mr. Ular's rose-coloured accounts, they all confess that they had to evacuate the country and crawl

into Manchuria in a starving condition, without having unearthed the riches reported to be lying at their feet. The bank lost three million roubles in the venture. Mr. Victor von Grot was ruined, and the politico-financial institution has therefore had a bellyful of mining experiences which should last it for many a long day. Glowing stories of the Ular character should be received with caution in London, where the actual conditions in Mongolia and Manchuria are not completely understood.

As the bank will not be tempted to invest further in this field, the foreign commercial houses and the Harbin millers have been approached, hat in hand, and a few thousands obtained, which have been sunk in the preliminary development work. Nobody is very sanguine, however, nor is any real success expected so long as the present uncertain conditions prevail. The Grand Duke's agents have tried to enlist capital in European Russia, but none is forthcoming. Well-informed men say that so many fortunes have been lost in Urals during recent years that Russian capitalists understand the word "wild-cat" as well as the sharpest operators in the Jungle Markets.

Turning to lumbering, it is much the same story, although a certain amount of timber has been actually felled and carted away. The big company is, of course, the Yalu Lumber Co., which is just as much a Manchurian as a Korean venture. The company has an imposing head office on the Port Arthur

bund, so it is permissible to treat it under the present heading. The company's chief agent is Baron Gunsberg, so well known to everyone in the Far East; and he and Monsieur Pavlow are engaged in unremitting wire-pulling to get things put on a more solid footing on the Korean side of the Yalu. Everyone is fond of saying that it is merely a political undertaking, that the company never expected to make any money, and that figures should not be quoted. This is, however, incorrect, for the Russian Government is highly anxious to acquire the entire Yalu lumber income, now in the hands of the native dealers, which is said to amount to about a million sterling per annum.

The Yalu Company, although it is, according to Russian accounts, so purely political, is already in difficulties, for it is reported that there is a trifle of four million roubles to the Company's debit, and that there are directorial troubles over the question of the divisions of spoils which threaten to upset the whole concern. Not being able to hit upon a working plan which produced a reasonable amount of lumber, let alone income, and with the Port Arthur head-office clamouring to know where all the millions had gone, the Yalu agents had a brilliant thought. They decreed that all Chinese rafts floated down the Yalu should be brought to them, so that they might be taken over at a fixed valuation. This has worked after a fashion, and several million feet of wood have been successfully corralled during the past half-year. A great part of

this is now lying on the Port Arthur foreshore. A big saw-mill is also said to be in process of erection ; but this should not needlessly alarm Far Eastern dealers.

It is likewise interesting to learn that the Yalu Company is also engaged in mining—that is to say, it has a mining engineer—an Italian—in its employ ; and that constitutes mining in Manchuria according to the Russian ideas. Mines, according to this Italian gentleman, are not a very rising market in the Yalu valleys. One evening, after his arrival from the Korean frontier, he became very entertaining in his description of Russian ideas concerning the earth's hidden wealth. "They are so funny," he said, with his fervid Italian accent and his broken English. "They ask me where is gold ; I said I do not know. Then they become very angry, and do what Englishman call 'Goddam.' I answer we must look—prospect ; they say no ; they have said there is gold, I am engineer, I must work it ; if not, I must go home ; so I go home. Ah, they are very funny, the Russians!"

So even the most optimistic man cannot really say that much progress has been made in either industry in Manchuria, and the whole thing is but another dream—a very extravagant and expensive dream.

But some day, when the Russian is beaten out of Manchuria, vast fortunes are going to be made in Manchurian gold ; so, oh, London Stock Exchange!

when the South African markets have become possible again, and the crisis in the far East is ended, remember this corner of the world, and be quick to act. There are plenty of Englishmen who can give you the necessary information, and are praying that Manchuria will not be forgotten.

CHAPTER X

HARBIN BY NIGHT

THE sun had scarcely set in the far-away West, more distant here to the eye on account of the vast plains which surround the city, before the temperature dropped with a suddenness that made one shiver. The day had been warm, almost too warm, in the sun, and even summer clothes did not strike one as being incongruous, although in three weeks there would be ice on the Sungari. Once King Sol had disappeared, however, the thermometer shot down remorselessly twenty-five degrees, and as the night wore on it got colder and colder, until freezing point could not be very far off in the small hours of the morning.

Your early supper finished, you do not go wisely to bed in Harbin (as doubtless you ought to), for the real life of the place, such as it is, only begins with the lighting of the lamps, and the aphorism concerning Rome applies with special force to Harbin, since the beds are too miserable to be inviting. The stranger in Port Arthur is apt to be surprised at the rate of going which he finds in the

fortress city; but if he has friends there they will tell him, with meaning looks, "Ah! but you should see Harbin." Since I was now in that delectable place, I was determined to earn merit by beginning at the beginning and finishing at the bitter end, cost what it might. Nine o'clock found me, therefore, with others, at the theatre, for Harbin boasts of a theatre, where not only are comedies and tragedies performed, but also divine operas. To-night, however, they were burning incense at the shrine of Thalia, goddess of comedy, and so I looked forward to some hours of sleep. It is difficult to laugh when you do not understand, and the thick air of a Russian interior always induces slumber, if not asphyxiation.

At the door we met with a serious difficulty; the ticket-office man was overwhelmed, bitterly put out, he assured us, but there were no more seats, and he could do nothing for us. It is curious how often this happens in Russian Manchuria, how often cruel fate condemns you to disappointment—unless your pocket-book happens to be there. The leader of our party sighed bitterly and deeply, opened with no undue haste the private door leading into the box-office, and disappeared for a brief space. Whilst I was still looking on wonderingly, and meditating deeply on the curiousness of things, he reappeared holding a stage-box coupon in his hand. Yes, he said, we had been singularly lucky; one box, almost the best box, too, in the theatre, had been overlooked; the ticket-clerk was sure,

quite sure, that it had been reserved—that he would get into trouble through reselling it to us; but that for the time being we might occupy it, provided we left after the play was finished, and did not cart it away with us. This much I gathered, but it is best not to investigate too closely when the golden key has accomplished its task.

Meanwhile, we made our way into the gardens, for the theatre is but one of the manifold attractions in this Harbin establishment, and outside, amongst dusty trees and glaring lamps, you have broad promenades, cafés, juggler shows and other things. The Russian must be amused or he will die of ennui, and so he amuses himself as best he can even in the centre of Manchuria. Polite Harbin was all there, either seated at little tables, with overcoats on and looking mighty cold, or circling round and round the walks waiting for a bell to ring or something to begin. The distinguishing characteristic of a Harbin crowd, as opposed to a Port Arthur crowd, is that it is almost entirely civilian, with but few bright uniforms to enliven it. A Caucasian, clothed in his handsome, mauve-brown national costume, and with tall Astrakhan cap, arrogated to himself the entire attention of my unworthy eyes. I mistook him for at least a general of wild irregular cavalry, and was bitterly disappointed when I was assured that he was a most commonplace Harbin merchant, interested in carpets. Fancy a carpet merchant with the air of a conqueror and the clothes of a Genghis Khan!

Presently a bell rang to inform us that the local Coquelins and Tooles were ready to amuse us. I was more than glad, for the pleasures of drinking Roederer, extra-sweet and treble-sugared, in the open air with an overcoat on, were beginning to pall on me. Drink we had to, however, for money earned during the day must be spent at night in Russian Manchuria, or else you will fall under suspicion.

Harbin's playhouse is an evil reproduction of the one you will find in Saigon, if fortune wills that you should ever turn to French Indo-China. It is not unlike an oblong box, and apart from the seating on the floor, there is only accommodation in a broad gallery which runs round the whole auditorium some fifteen feet above one's head. The boxes are like little cattle pens, and are only separated from one another by partitions three feet high, consisting merely of rough wood unadorned in any way. It will be seen that things are somewhat primitive. You likewise keep your hat and coat on in your Harbin theatre, and if you feel so inclined, although it is strictly prohibited, you puff at a cigarette behind your hand. The boxes are always select, very select in fact, and *du côté des dames* are very high-priced. The front rows of the stalls were filled with gilded youth of the place, smartened up and attempting to appear most reckless dogs; for to enchant the ladies and win their smiles in Harbin, you must be devil-me-care above your fellows. Behind them sat a class of

more humble persons, *la petite bourgeoisie* of Harbin, which in day-time concerns itself with minor trade, and in the evening is too worn to look anything but tired. In the gallery were booted gods, smelling most persistently of leather, and accompanied by their women-kind, who, gay with coloured handkerchiefs tied over their heads, chatted incessantly. The audience was good-humoured to a degree, and intensely enthusiastic, for your Russian has generally the best heart in the world, and is only eccentric because he is the creature of a Government which is intent on arresting his civilisation and natural development. The play was not very interesting to me, and was punctuated by huge intervals, during which one sat outside and gazed at open-air jugglers, or listened to a military band. On the promenades there was always the same crowd slowly circling round and round, and raising pillars of dust. Soon after eleven the play was over, and the curtain fell on actors and actresses clothed in last century fashions. Straight-fronted corsets and bell-shaped skirts have not progressed as far as Harbin yet. The clothing is still of the fashion of the early nineties, and half-forgotten photographs come back to one.

The hour when the real business of the night commences was now fast approaching, for all the cafés-chantants and tingle-tangle shows only open their doors shortly before twelve o'clock, and the theatre plays merely because you have to do something between nine and midnight, for you can get in all the

bed-time you want in the morning. We slipped into a drosky at the theatre gates—for it is not good to wander about Harbin at night on foot. Only a few nights before, fearful screams had been heard in the very centre of one of the main streets, and when morning came it found two dead men lying stark and naked with skulls beaten in. I myself had seen in the afternoon a ruffianly giant seated on a big cart and chained hand and foot, who was being sent back to Saghalien for life, under an armed escort of six men. He was wanted for half-a-dozen murders, and had been captured that morning in Harbin after the most desperate struggle; and the young soldiers who guarded him were looking at him with frightened eyes. Harbin is full of criminals and men that are badly wanted, but the Government is too intent on other business to pay any attention to them. When you have seen one of Russia's criminals, you realise that she is not treating them too harshly by condemning them to life-sentences in Saghalien.

We were glad when we drew up safely at the doors of the "Golden Anchorite" and heard the scraping of violins. At least there would be some satisfaction in an artistic death. Your Harbin café-chantant is a strict reproduction of the singing cafés of other countries—a small stage, small tables, and the usual allowance of women, and high-priced drinks *de rigueur*. But in the matter of drinks they have got things down to a finer point in Harbin. If you are a true man you drink either coffee or champagne and nothing else. Should you be poor,

you emphasise the fact by ordering coffee, and you need say no more—you are classified in your proper category, and given up as hopeless. Are you rich, then you order champagne, and are immediately courted by all. Roederer, extra-sweet, is the measure of a restaurant-keeper's profits. In the morning he calculates his gains by a brief, pregnant query of "How many cases yesterday?" He multiplies the number given by fifty roubles, and he knows approximately at once what he has gained, for his profits are five pounds a case. Everything else is regarded as unprofitable, and your waiter will not tell you what coffee costs. It is a sweet and primitive system, and fills the average man with envy.

Presently the orchestra struck up a gay air, as an invitation to remember where you were. The musicians were clad in yellow flannel trimmed with fantastic designs in red braid, and had blue noses, as a silent protest against the folly of their attire. They imagined they looked like Neapolitan boatmen, and I suppose they were satisfied. After their introduction came a women's chorus, given by the entire strength of the *troupe*. If there is one thing Russians can do well it is singing, and even in this little one-horse show one heard voices of surprising power and clearness, which were well worth the champagne.

Meanwhile the little tables were being rapidly filled up by ladies and gentlemen of various kinds, whose taste in clothes was divine. The most

impossible combinations of colours were to be seen, and Paris and London would have moaned could they have but witnessed the sights.

Presently the masculine *habitués* of the place began to appear. These gentlemen have a mode of life so original that it is worth recounting. They go to bed at eight in the evening, get up at midnight, put on some scent, and proceed to supper at their favourite resort, staying there till the closing hour, which is about four or five in the morning. Thus Harbin's special requirements are met, and eight hours' sleep obtained in addition, an eminently satisfactory result. I protested with one man against the absurdity of the system, but he quoted back Rome and Romans at me, and said that life in Harbin was so little worth living anyway that debauch was preferable to dulness. Our genial café was in the meantime going stronger and stronger, and as the night advanced and the number of dead bottles increased, the pace became more and more rapid. Passions find primitive expression in Harbin, for only a week before an officer had drawn his sword and attempted to slaughter a girl who was engaged in the pleasant task of transferring her affections to another pocket-book. Suicides also punctuate time and relieve monotony. Women drink poisons because other women have charms more potent than theirs, and fall gasping at their lovers' feet with imprecations of Italian fervour. "We have had two suicides this week," whispered a man to me; "who is to

be the third?" "Not yourself, I hope," I answered. "No," he said, grimly, "I have got beyond that." Life is certainly rapid in Harbin, and somewhat chequered. Long before the final galop began, a mysterious person came up to us and whispered that there was some fun to be had not a verst away—a gambling saloon where the limit was the roof of the house. We promptly assented, and walked out. Our guide stepped briskly off the wooden pavement, and took the middle of the street. The hint was significant, and we duly followed, keeping close together and not stopping to look at the moon, which was flooding the streets with a silver light. Our way lay through some of the better streets of the town, but still there were sounds of revelry everywhere. Occasionally we passed drunken wretches lurching along full of vodka, and cursing deeply as they fell over ruts and stones. The doors of cheap drinking-shops, where you can get crazy drunk for a few kopecks, leered at us every few yards, and made us feel sorry night birds. At last we reached our destination. At the back of a vast, barn-like house was a big room, choking with smoke and full of people. In the centre was a roulette wheel, surrounded by stacks of paper roubles and a ring of vile faces. No one spoke when we came in, for all were too interested or too far gone. We staked a little, and were careful not to talk of going until we had lost. It was too low and senseless for any man, in spite of champagne fumes and the remote

possibility of winning. Soon we had enough of it —gave our guide a ten rouble note and abruptly left, some cheerful and the others gloomy.

For my part, I understood the meaning of all this so-called gaiety. The Russian house in Manchuria is even less of a home for any one than it is in Russia itself. The Russian builds himself a house in his Far East, but does not occupy it properly. He camps in it with some rattletrap bedding, heats up his stoves, and when he is not sleeping, takes care to remain outside. Can you wonder that he comforts himself with wine, one-day wives, and song? Can you wonder that things are so bad? He must learn a great deal before he can be taken seriously as a permanency beyond his natural boundaries. He must be taught in the school-room of bitter experience. Looking at these things, I cannot believe in the Russian's permanence in Manchuria. . . . However, I have got a long way from my night in Harbin, and I do not think that I am exactly sorry.

CHAPTER XI

THE HINDOO WATCHDOG—A WORD TO INDIA.

In all the important towns you will find them—long Sikhs and short Sikhs, thin men and fat men, men with bristling beards and men with proudly-curled mustachios ; and finally boy-men on whom the face-hair is but beginning to sprout. Sometimes they are clad in cast-off clothing of English make, above which mountainous turbans of pink or yellow—but more often red—tower, and fittingly becapping eloquent heads. More often they have forsaken such tangible signs of the Englishman's faint sovereignty over Indian souls in exile, and appear bravely attired in long Russian boots, baggy trousers, coats embroidered with mock astrakhan, and tall fur caps —in a word, veritable Siberiaks, duly assimilated. And in Port Arthur there is even one man—he is of the short variety with the bristling beard—who on warm summer nights may be seen watching his warehouse in the bright yellow and scarlet of a native regiment, the fleeting souvenir of his former service to the English raj. What an irony of fate—a former soldier of the King-Emperor guarding the

goods of the traditional enemy on a spot acquired mainly owing to England's weakness!

How they all got there, nobody exactly knows. Even so far north as Manchuria lies, the native of India is at home, for is it not true that wherever the Chinaman is, it is still the inscrutable and immutable East, where all Easterners may congregate, fraternise, and be content? It probably began, however, on a big scale when the Russians poured into Manchuria in 1900, and commerce, as it is understood by people who are simply army-sutlers in gross, accumulated great stores of edibles, drinkables, clothables, and many other things which require diligent watching. The lower-grade Russian, the man who may be hired for three pounds a month even in the expensive dream-Empire, was obviously untrustworthy. Having heard that a state of war had existed between him and all Far Easterners for a space, he was pleased to pretend that the peaceful trader's wares were as legitimate loot as any Chinese silver or bronze idols; so in the most cynical way he stole wherever he could, and was henceforth stamped as impossible so far away from his home. Then Chinese were tried, but the Chinaman is only too human in his own country, and too generally weak with the white man; and when some fierce-looking rascal approached at night and offered the alternatives of comparative wealth for a few short minutes' sleep, or the pressing attentions of a heavy knobbed stick, sleep was promptly feigned—and the next day much was missing.

So the Sikh watchman—the well-nigh universal watchman of the Extreme East—had to be requisitioned, whether the authorities liked it or not. At first the authorities pretended that they did not like it. Then they thought a little and smiled. "All right," they said, "bring your Sikhs, as many as you like and as quickly as you please, and on second thoughts we may even take a few ourselves." You see the Russian powers that be are cunning, very cunning, and they love little experiments, especially little experiments which may forecast big results in some dim future. So the Sikhs duly came, just a few at the beginning and with great hesitation, Sikhs who had blood-brothers at Newchang, where the Englishman is, and where the new thing could be first explained. The newcomers inquired much, talked a great deal, fingered paper roubles with head-shaking doubts, and were not satisfied until this mere paper adorned with the head of the mythical great white Czar was duly exchanged into hard ringing Mexican dollars. Then there was no doubt at all. The money was good, the pay was far higher than in mere China ports of the old type, and there was drink, plenty of drink too, and so cheap!

So the Sikh coming by way of Newchang was duly installed in office at Port Arthur and Dalny, seaports where ships sometimes came in with bronze-coloured men, such as they working the cargo-holds and the engines, and quite ready to chant them in high-pitched voices the news of their older world.

Letters in time went forth, curious letters with envelopes addressed by friendly Englishmen in bold English characters, to relatives, friends, and acquaintances all over the East. "Brother, we are here in the Far North amongst the Russians, and we are not unhappy. It is a land pleasant in summer, with no great heat. In winter the winds are deadly cold, black dust that chokes blows in dense clouds, so that the sky is not seen. We must wear skins. The money, though all paper, is good. Our pay is also high. The Ruski is first hard to meet. Then when he is known we like him better. Food we have in plenty, and much drink. Brothers, we are not unhappy."

In this spirit the first letters were written, if English eyes that have seen are true, and as the news spread that respectability is no northern virtue, the headmen were bothered with countless applications. Hopeless drunkards, men once policemen and watchmen in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and further south, mere driftwood until this fresh current caught them, floated mysteriously north and were duly engaged. Followers and renegade soldiers from the last China Expedition likewise heard the news, and packed all the way by rail from Tientsin to Newchang until they were safe in Russian hands. So from the triad of seaports this strange invasion of alien watchmen pushed further and further north until Harbin was reached. Then, as the Russian became more and more familiar, they forgot their halting English and went begging at railway head-

quarters in fluent speech for posts in smaller places where they might be headmen too. So the faithful Sikh is to-day the watchdog of central and southern Manchuria. He guards countless stacks of vodka at Port Arthur, chests of tea at Dalny, shirtings at Newchang, railway goods at the junctions, shops and stores at Harbin, and nameless places in other spots. Already they are numbered by dozens in the chief towns, and are continually coming. So are all beginnings made. Beware of the tares in time.

At first there was some bloodshed and fighting. The low-grade Russian, taught by a cheap-grade literature that these dark men are the traditional enemies, who, officered by white Englishmen, bar the advance south, where an irresistible destiny should have already carried the Czar's eagles, taunted the Sikhs with their colour, called them coolies, and so knives were drawn and heads broken. This was, however, only at the very beginning. Soon the tall Sikh's weakness for strong waters was discovered. Men who have drunk together and become drunk have an odd fellowship for one another. The next day and the day after, and then for all time, they are willing to shake hands and be loving. So the Sikh and the other men from India, by endless drink and endless talk, were won over by the low-class Russian, were pleasantly surprised with the familiarity and the terms of equality on which they were met, and were inwardly delighted to find at last white men who did not verily profess to be their equals. Then the Russian told stories

of how he was one day coming to liberate all those crushed by England's haughty dominion; how all Asiatics would rejoice to find themselves governed as they loved, loosely with a great corruption, by which all the cunning ones might become rich, and the people attain an untrammelled liberty, undreamed of at present.

In this fashion have the King's dusky subjects been reconciled, and to-day the Sikh in Manchuria is happy and content, and—sad truth—likes the Russian looseness far better than any British strictness. For may he not drink and be merry endlessly? May he not indulge in unspeakable vices openly, and without fear of punishment? May he not, in fact, do just as he likes so long as he is obedient, and submits without a murmur? Already, in most cases, poorly-learnt English is forgotten and the mongrel Russian—the *lingua franca* of the railway—is jabbered with much fluency. To all Easterners there is no doubt whatsoever that the Russian idiom, with all its silky softness, its rhythmic sentences, is more facile than hard English. And, likewise, to most Asiatics freedom to indulge in all pleasures without restraint is a tempting bait. . . .

So, take note, India! At the Tientsin siding the armed Sikh and the armed Cossack faced each other for the first time with all the traditional hatred that the schools love to speak of gleaming from their eyes, and itched to dash across the narrow rails and have at one another. To-day, in Manchuria, the unarmed Sikh and the peaceful Siberian have mixed,

fraternised, and to their surprise found each other sympathetic in their cups. Letters have gone forth; news has travelled fast and far; men have jabbered endlessly. Who knows how far the poison has already gone? Who knows what the results will be? Each day pushes the Indian and Russian frontiers nearer in the Middle East; in the Farther East the frontiers of sentiment have been almost broken down.

CHAPTER XII

WEST TO TSITSIHAR

It was with no feelings of regret that I shook the copious dust of Harbin from my feet and took my place in the train. Except for such as are making money rapidly through fat railway contracts or through some form of debauchery, Harbin is not a place which beckons to one in one's dreams. Personally I despise the place most utterly as it is at present, and know that unless things within the next year or two are placed on a better basis, there will be a first-class smash. The flour-mills are the only liquid assets in the whole town; everything else is but the result of the abnormal spending of railway money, which cannot go on indefinitely, and is even now being daily curtailed. Prohibitive and absurd freight rates isolate Harbin even from its lusty brother, Port Arthur, and make legitimate trade with the outside world an utter impossibility.

The absence of all sound business methods among Russian firms must sooner or later have one result—that of finding themselves cut off from all

money-making by being underbid or undersold by Chinese traders, who are fully alive to the vast possibilities of Manchuria. Already hard-headed Shantung merchants are pushing away the smaller Russian fry. The wonderful Chinese guild system, and the freemasonry which exists between all fellow-provincials, enable them to work in combination with one another, attacking any particular field with an irresistible cutting of rates which spells starvation to improvident Siberian traders, and fills them with sombre rage. One of the biggest railway contracts went to Chinese whilst I was in Harbin, and the head of a guild where I was entertained assured me that in a couple of years, when they had more in capital, they would begin a policy of losing money, so as to kill off all competition. The Chinese counter-invasion in peaceful commerce will gradually oust out every Russian from Manchuria who is not a mere pensioner of his Government, of that I am convinced; and instead of its being one triumphant march applauded by all, the Muscovite will have reason to shortly curse Far Eastern expansion in the bitterest terms.

With such thoughts in my head, I watched the train rumble over the great Sungari railway bridge. The chimney of the giant engine puffed out clouds of steam slowly, as if gasping at the great weight it was forced to drag; below us, on the river, the far-away cry of a junk-man was wafted up as he called to his brothers on the railway embankment that he had arrived. Flop, flop, went the railway

wheels ; we had crossed the Sungari, and were now in wild Hei-lung-chiang.

Hei-lung-chiang has always been more or less of a "No man's land," inhabited mainly by Chinese convicts and banished mandarins labouring on the post roads, by gold-seekers, and sable hunters. It is true, however, that of late years Shantung immigrants have been slowly pushing up to this Manchurian north-west, and have settled in increasing numbers in all the rich river valleys. Virgin soil is constantly being broken, and much of the splendid grain going to the Harbin flour mills is floated down by water from the Black Dragon province.

It is not far, as distances go in Manchuria, from Harbin to Tsitsihar, but on the parliamentary slow-coach I had taken an attempt was evidently being seriously made to see how long a train could really take to cover something under three hundred versts, or say two hundred miles. Whatever they were trying to do, they succeeded admirably in making even the Russian third-class passengers ultimately savage and despairing ; and as for myself, I conceived the wild hope that, including stoppages, we would average under eight miles an hour, and so arrive at Tsitsihar early in the morning instead of in the dead of night, as we were timed to do. The engine-driver was more drunk than usual, and at each station only the united arguments of all the local officials, and they are many—since the railway apparently gives employ-

ment to every Russian youth who solicits it—could induce him to mount his cab and pull the lever. It was funny for a couple of hours; then it got monotonous. The engine-drivers in Manchuria are curious birds. Only a year ago one of them refused to drive his train any farther unless the hat was sent round for him among the passengers. After nearly three days' delay the hat did go round, and 200 roubles was collected. The train then moved on, and so did the engine-driver when he got to headquarters. . . .

For many miles after we left Harbin the country showed the same continuous cultivation as in the southern provinces. Undulating plains stretched out on either side of the track, and without a break stood interminable kaoliang or wheat. The harvest was nearly finished here, however, and the crops stood stacked in many places in huge ricks twenty or thirty feet high, ready to be carted away. Here the teams harnessed to the carts were even more numerous than in Kirin and Fengtien, and, attached to one single conveyance, I counted fourteen animals—mules, ponies, donkeys, and oxen all mixed up together, and looking as happy and as well fed as any animals I have ever seen. Droves of great black pigs were careering about the stubble of the fields, lashed into order by boys armed with heavy stock whips that cracked with the report of pistols. Pig breeding is a great industry all over Manchuria, and it is these northern provinces which supply much of North China with their pork.

The absence of trees gave the plains a cold dreary appearance as the day wore on, but the setting sun, turning the rich soil a golden-brown, stamped the correct impression of the country on one's memory. Agriculturally, it is rich beyond the dreams of avarice, and that is the last word about it. As we got farther away from Harbin the aspect of the country changed somewhat. To the north of the railway the land was still tilled and tilled again, but to the south, open, uncultivated patches of plain became more and more frequent. We were approaching central and western Hei-lung-chiang, where the Mongol frontier (a purely imaginary frontier, by the way) is only distant some fifty miles from the railway. Gazing anxiously through my glasses to the south, I was at last rewarded with the sight of a multitude of small black dots that shifted unceasingly with tiny movements. It was a herd of Mongol ponies grazing at large, or coming in slowly to some horse-market in Manchuria.

All along the south of Hei-lung-chiang province the Chinese foreigner has only been slowly pushing back the Mongol nomad with his flocks and his herds, and even to-day the Shantung settler has only conquered a little corner of this north-west. I need not have been so excited at the distant sight, for an hour afterwards, when we drew up at a poor little station, possessing practically no railway guards at all, and looking very miserable, there was a Mongol encampment with ponies galore, evidently just halted for the night. I hastily

jumped down, and as I have the Mongol to the extent of exactly a dozen words, I fired them off promptly. Imagine my surprise when I was promptly answered in pure Shantung. The gentleman who did me the honour of replying was a Chinaman from the Laichou prefecture in Shantung, and was minus his pigtail. He told me that in consequence of a little affair in his native province, he had been condemned to the post roads in Manchuria, and that after the Boxer trouble he had run away and become a Mongol! He incidentally told me that he was supposed to be a slave, but since he had "pao lo" (run away), he thought that that had been forgotten, and that he was going into Harbin in consequence. A singularly frank gentleman was this, and a very lusty one. He professed the utmost contempt for Mongols and Russians, and said that one Chinaman was worth at least ten of these. "In war?" I asked. "No," he answered, "not in war, because we are still afraid; but later on that will come." . . . Ponies were getting dearer all the time, he added, because the Russians were buying all they could, and it was impossible to find any which had not been bespoke by some dealer or another. Whereupon he promptly offered to sell me his whole consignment! Such is the Chinaman even in exile; always ready for a deal.

Meanwhile our train was slowly steaming off, and I had scarcely time to jump on board before the driver began to make things lively. Tired evidently of the gay life on the iron track, he pro-

A Manchu Musical Entertainment.

ceeded to let her rip, and rip we did, until things were distinctly dangerous. We rushed the next station at about forty miles an hour, and in spite of everybody and everything we did not stop until we reached the following one. I was then able to taste the pleasures of the Westinghouse pneumatic brake operated to its utmost capacity, and for a solid shake-up I can thoroughly recommend it. The difficult feat of stopping a train in its own length was successfully performed, and the driver was led away protesting to the station-master. He said that war had been declared—that he wanted to be the first to carry the news to Russia—that he was working for his country . . . We were now in a serious dilemma, because even the Chinese Eastern Railway does not keep spare engine-drivers at way-side stations, and the two Chinese stokers were hardly qualified to run us to Tsitsihar. However, the driver was finally quieted down, the vodka-bottles taken out of his capacious breeches pockets, and after a peaceful weep he was allowed to mount again. In this manner we finally reached Tsitsihar, or rather Tsitsihar's station (for the town is miles away), in the small hours of the morning, and I peacefully encamped myself on the buffet-table and slept the sleep of the tired and dirty, awaiting day-light, breakfast, and an adventurous future.

CHAPTER XIII

SIDE LIGHTS

ALMOST the first things that struck me on landing at Dalny were, first a sweeping condemnation of all Russian methods in Manchuria spoken by a Russian in most fluent English—then a sketch by another man of the manner in which Dalny has been built, compressed in two expressive words, "damned robbery"—and lastly the sight of a ricksha coolie giving the revolver-and-sword-armed policeman on the jetty ten cents so that he might be the first man to get a fare. These three things served as convenient sign-posts to hark back to mentally whenever things went more than usually wrong elsewhere.

Most people suppose that where the Russian is with his Government listening behind his back, open talk and strong criticism are out of the question, and are never heard. This may be the case in revolutionary centres in Russia itself, where the Government and its police agents are on the look out and have special instructions to enforce; but in the Russian Far East it is certainly not so. Indeed it

seems to be rather a pose to be "agin the Government" as much as you possibly can, and as openly as possible, and to swear at anything that goes amiss just as lustily as any Englishman would dare to do on his own ground.

Perhaps Russians are forced to talk more than other men because they have no papers which do the talking for them—for the Russian Far Eastern Press is hopelessly tame and repressed, and is entirely in the hands of the Government. Of course the *Novo Krai* of Port Arthur is the best known newspaper, for it is Viceroy Alexeieff's mouthpiece, and roars blood and thunder. The *Novo Krai* is the property of a Colonel Atemieff who has made a fortune in bookstalls and job printing through his connection with the Press. Once a week, and more often when things are extra grave, the gallant Colonel tiffins with the Viceroy of the Far East at the Viceregal Mansion, from which a magnificent view of Port Arthur harbour is to be had, and high politics and the education of local public opinion are minutely discussed; with results which appear in print in a very short time.

The *Novo Krai* is very out-spoken, and believes with great earnestness in its mission in life. The mission is to preach a strange doctrine, which may be called the mainland for the mainlanders, and those mainlanders are the Russians. Thus it constantly states that Japan must not be allowed in Korea—that, if necessary, Japan must be driven out of Korea, and that it may be even necessary to annihilate Japan

in the process. A singularly amiable and frank paper is the *Novo Krai*, and a true Empire-builder after Rhodes's own heart.

Manchuria is very seldom discussed by the *Novo Krai*, for the fate of Manchuria has already been settled according to this organ. The ingenious proprietor has been so entranced with the success of his newspaper, his bookstalls, and his job-printing, that he is quite willing to risk a few thousand roubles in another venture. An English newspaper —a weekly—is going to be started by him, and the type and the extra machinery have already arrived. This speaks well for his decision of character, for, generally, things in the Russian Far East never get much farther than the paper stage. However, it is as well to remember that his publication has not got to the paper stage yet! The Russian compositors are now busily studying the English alphabet, and it is hoped that by the 1st of January they will have become sufficiently expert to be able to set up English texts. The English editor is likewise already in Port Arthur, hard at work on the Russian alphabet, for he has a mighty task in front of him. Colonel Atemieff, the soldier-proprietor, is a student of practical politics, and is to be the author of a vast series of articles which will run for a year or two in his English newspaper, and prove historically—whatever that may mean—the friendship which should exist between Russia and England. He will begin with Peter the Great at work at ship-building in his shirt-sleeves, and end with the Tientsin siding

incident, giving the first authentic explanation of why the Sikh and the Cossack only gazed down each other's throats and did not let their rifles pop off. This should all be very interesting.

Apart from the Port Arthur semi-official organ, there is the Dalny *Vostok*, and also a Harbin paper. The Dalny *Vostok* devotes itself a great deal to articles of the how-to-become-rich-in-a-hurry type—doubtless with special reference to the sudden prosperity which may come any day to the drooping and doomed international port. The Harbin organ loves to compare the Russians in Manchuria to the hardy settlers of the Western prairies of America. Harbin is the Russian equivalent of an American Western town—Harbin has prairies around it—Harbin, therefore, will be great, must be great; in fact, is already great. It forgets that hustling American cities have no yellow men to ruin them by underselling. The prairies of Manchuria are already, unfortunately, mostly settled, and the population is increasing.

None of these newspapers appear daily. With the strict control exercised there is not enough copy for that, as even the Russian reading public gets tired of fairy stories and colourless comments on topical events. The *Novo Krai* appears tri-weekly; the Harbin and Dalny publications only twice a week. Whilst I was in Harbin there was an unconfirmed rumour that the local oracle was shortly coming out every other day, and people were rubbing their hands over the rumour and

attributing it to the growing prosperity of the place. Fancy an English town with thirty thousand inhabitants and no daily newspaper!

There is little telegraphic news in these sad publications, and Reuter is strictly taboo. Occasionally, special wires do come through, but not very often. Batoum and a fire in the oil fields is a veritable godsend, for even the Russians cannot smell sedition in kerosene. But in spite of this strict censorship of Russian newspapers in the leased territory, and beyond, English publications are allowed everywhere without any question being raised. In Vladivostock they are not so lucky. Foreign newspapers had, until quite recently, to be sent all the way to Moscow to be censored, and whenever the word Russia was found the whole column was simply inked out. A man told me of a funny case in which the ridiculousness of the whole system was fitly illustrated. An advertisement in a Far Eastern paper about candles had the word Russia in it by chance, and, of course, the whole thing was obliterated. My informant was anxious to know exactly how the passage ran, so he sent and got a duplicate by letter. Imagine his amusement when he discovered that it was a highly complimentary reference to the Russian demand for these candles in the Far East, and stated that copies of Russian testimonials would be sent on application. But the censor may have thought that it all had something to do with the ancient legend concerning the

practice of candle-eating among the Muscovites, and that it was therefore seditious.

The real reason for the establishment of an English newspaper at Port Arthur is a very simple one. It is in order that Russia may have an instrument to fight the formidable English newspaper belt which stretches from Singapore to Tokio, and numbers so many publications. The Russian Government attaches great importance to the newspaper war of words, and argues that it is solely owing to the uncompromising hostility and activity of the English Far Eastern Press that St. Petersburg's plans have miscarried so much of late, and that so much ill-feeling has been stirred up against Russia.

"You only hear one side of the question," an official in Port Arthur complained to me; "you only revile Russia and say that she is always bad and treacherous, because your Press is so strong"; and what he said represents the bulk of Russian opinion. The Far Eastern Press, although it is so inveighed against, is most carefully read. Everybody who is anybody in the Russian Far East subscribes to one or more English publications, and practically all authentic information is derived from this source. Amongst men who do not read English papers, the ignorance exhibited on questions of the day is appalling and quite unbelievable. In Harbin, for instance, there are men who after a couple of years in what is the very centre of Manchuria, have not an idea of the actual conditions of

the country round about them. They speak of the Chinese as Mantze, whatever that may mean; and I notice that even a well-informed writer like Mr. Wirt Gerrare talks of a Mantze village in Hei-lung-chiang, which he illustrates with a photograph of some Chinese carters and carts and the ordinary Chinese mud village in the distance.

Nothing has irritated Russia in the Far East so much as the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Well-informed Russians are never tired of inveighing against such a cowardly policy, as they call it, as that of allying ourselves with an Asiatic Power to make common cause against a European one. "Who says it is an alliance against an European Power?" I have often asked. "We do not ally ourselves because we wish to fight, but because we don't!" The invariable answer to this is merely a repetition of the same statements, and the accusation that we have betrayed Europe to gain our own base ends. It is remarkable that this view obtains amongst all non-Britishers in the Russian Far East, and that Continental Europe thoroughly sympathises with Russia. All the Germans in Port Arthur and Harbin are intensely pro-Russian; so are the French and the minor nationalities.

The great and final argument of all Russians on the Manchurian question is, that too much money has been spent by them to make a real and unconditional retreat possible. When you argue that their 1900 campaign has been paid for by the Chinese

Indemnity and that the railway, if properly run, should be able to look after itself, they stop you short and tell you that the railway can never be paid for, or made to pay, except by an open seizure of the country—that it has cost Russia five hundred millions of roubles already, and that the interest on five hundred millions is fifty millions a year—an impossible sum for them to earn. If that does not quiet you, they talk of Egypt—why do we stop in Egypt when we, too, said that we were going to evacuate? It is the same thing, they continue, but England has one code for herself and another for her enemies. You can only answer this with remarks about Russia's unpreparedness to undertake a civilising mission until she has set her own house in order, and has entirely changed her policy.

But if this creates a stormy argument it is nothing to what the mention of Japan does. Japan should not be discussed in Manchuria except with ample sea-room, for your Russian loathes the Japanese with a deadly loathing and affects to despise him. At heart he really fears his Prussian precision, and knows that it is going to make trouble for him sooner or later. Sometimes, generally after the seventh vodka or the second bottle of Roederer he will confess that his Government is a fool, that there has been too much bluff and too little preparation ; but in spite of this he will end up by comforting himself with the statement that Russia has never been really beaten, and that a Manchurian disaster

at most only means a temporary set-back—is merely an incident in Russian history.

The Russian is proud of one thing—the manner in which he believes he succeeds with the Chinaman. "Look how they all come to us," he exclaims, and forgets that he is paying all labour at least 50 per cent. more than it is worth, and that naturally no Chinaman ever born will let such a heaven-sent opportunity slip whilst the breath of life remains. Then the Russian Far East owns Chi fun-tai, the millionaire Chinaman, who has become a Russian subject to save his head. They are very proud of Chi fun-tai in Port Arthur, and always throw him at you as an example of Russia as an assimilating Power. Yet Chi fun-tai is simply a Shantung coolie who has amassed three million taels (and is credited with twenty millions), because he talks Russian. Chi fun-tai has hundreds of houses at Port Arthur and Dalny, charters thousands of junks, contracts for tens of thousands of coolies, and is getting very rich in the process; but, for all that, is a mere illiterate coolie who has been very lucky. He could not earn a living in Central or Southern China except with a shovel, for Chehkiang and Canton dealers are in a sphere far above him and will hardly deal with him. It is only because Manchuria is the Shantung native's happy hunting-ground, and that respectable Chinese hold aloof, that Chi fun-tai has become wealthy. The Mouk den electric lighting scheme is partly promoted by

him. The Chinese say that if the authorities can get the fat man into their hands his head will fall for his treachery to his country, and so Chi fun-tai carries little opium balls in his capacious sleeves warranted to take but three minutes to do their work.

CHAPTER XIV

TSITSIHAR

Tsitsihar lies some distance away from the left bank of the river Nonni, and is the capital of the province of the Hei-lung-chiang, or the "Black Dragon river." The province derives its name from the fact that the Black Dragon river, or Amur, used to flow through the province instead of forming the Northern boundary as it does at present. Tsitsihar is the Manchu or Tartar name, call it which you please, and the town is known to the Chinese as P'u-kuei. The river Nonni is an affluent of the Sungari, which it enters a hundred miles south of Harbin.

The Nonni is navigable by large junks and small steamers as far as Tsitsihar and by smaller craft up to a Chinese garrison town called Mergen, which is only a little over a hundred miles by road from infamous Blagoveschensk on the Amur. In 1900, after the childish bombardment of the Amur shipping from that town by the Chinese garrison town of Aigun and the subsequent *noyade*, a Russian column crossed the Black Dragon river,

reduced Aigun to ashes, and entered Tsitsihar in a few days *viâ* the Aigun-Mergen-Tsitsihar post-road. Tsitsihar, therefore, although separated from Transbaikalia in the west by the Hsing-an mountains, lies in an extremely vulnerable position, owing to the comparative proximity of the Siberian frontier in the North and the extreme facility with which reinforceing troops could be pushed into it from Blagoveschensk and the Amur province. Not only are the post-roads fairly well kept and easy to negotiate for troops with indifferent or improvised transport, but in addition, after three days' march from the Amur, all impedimenta can be flung into sampans and junks even before Mergen is reached, and carried without difficulty to the Hei-lung-chiang capital by water.

The Russians have been slow at realising this, and are only to-day seeking to repair their negligence by demanding from China the right to establish an exclusively Russian settlement at Tsitsihar. They have also suggested that, as Tsitsihar is sufficiently remote from anywhere, the erection of Russian powder-mills and arsenals there would have a civilising influence on the country at large.

As dawn broke I was aroused from my none too comfortable couch at the railway station. A singularly dirty coolie came in, looked at me with suspicion and retired slamming the door. Chinese employed by the Russians are always super-dirty and super-ignorant. I got down and stretched myself,

bemoaned a fate which compels people to rise at ungodly hours, and went out into the cold. It was certainly frigid in Hei-lung-chiang, and winter had almost arrived. Hoar frost covered the ground, and the idea of washing was very distressing. Sleepy railway guards in their eternal green and black were coming out of their guard-houses scratching their heads and buckling on their belts as their share of washing and dressing. Resolutely seizing a bucket I washed and was duly rejuvenated. Presently the samovar was lighted in the buffet-room, hot tea became an actuality, and life distinctly more bearable. All these illustrates what a funny creature is man. Let him wash a little and eat a little, and the world is rose-coloured, even in far-away Hei-lung-chiang. The inner man satisfied, I looked for transport to carry me into the city. Three methods seemed possible —by bone-breaking Peking cart, by diminutive donkey transport, or by jibbing pony. I chose the donkeys; and, hoisting my traps on top of one animal and myself on another, we sped away.

Like all stations on the Manchurian railway, the one at Tsitsihar is some miles away from the Chinese city, roughly speaking. I should say that the distance is thirty Chinese li, or ten miles, although the donkey drivers said it was more. We soon left the small mass of railway buildings behind us, and with cries and shouts the drivers urged on the plucky little donkeys, seated on whom travel is certainly easy. The city walls could be seen a long way off, and far away to the south-west were rising hills and dales—

the outposts of the main ridges of the Hsing-an, now only some eighty or hundred miles distant. Numbers of people were going towards Tsitsihar, some in carts, others on ponies or donkeys. Nearly all of them were Chinese, as much strangers in the land as myself, and engaged on various businesses. The ill-sounding Shantung variety of northern Chinese was the one most commonly heard, and it was amusing to listen to the uncomplimentary comments of the carters and local people, all of whom spoke the purest Pekinese, and disdained all other dialects. Racing along the dusty roads, we at last approached the city gates. A dirty Russian flag tied to a long bamboo waved above the South Gate, through which we entered, but the only persons of military aspect we saw were two unkempt-looking Chinese police armed with heavy cudgels, who gazed at me with open mouths. In answer to my question about the presence of Russian troops, they answered hastily and evidently under instructions, "Yi ching t'ui liao" (they have been already withdrawn); but when I pointed significantly to the Russian flag, they swore gently under their breaths and refused to parley with me further. The donkeymen, however, were more communicative. "The Russians have not gone," they said; "but how many they are, or what they are going to do, no man knows." I tried to get them to give me some estimate of the number of men actually in Tsitsihar, but I could get no satisfactory answer, and had to content myself with listening to vague generalities.

Tsitsihar is very much like Kirin and Moukden —probably more like Moukden—in outward appearance; that is, a Peking on a small scale. Lofty mud walls surround the city, and a number of gates give access within. The gates are surmounted by "lou" or towers, where in olden days constant watch was kept against surprise attacks of marauding bands. Beyond the walls are streets upon streets of houses and hovels, whose existence is, properly speaking, unauthorised, and which stand on land generally without title deeds and belonging to the Government. To the north of Tsitsihar, several miles beyond the gates, are some permanent camps of Chinese bannermen, the hereditary soldiery who are to-day so useless.

In Tsitsihar itself the streets and houses, to my mind, have that inexpressible charm which is the peculiar hall-mark of an old-world city. There is a subdued bustle even in the busiest streets, and men move with a dignity which is not to be found in China itself, far away from where the Manchus once throve. A graceful memorial arch crowns the main street; Peking carts, covered with red and blue cloth, speed slowly along, dragged by sleek-looking mules, and their carters, instead of rudely rushing past you in the narrow places, jump off their seats and beg that your honourable self will move a little to one side so that their clumsy cart may not bespatter you. Horsemen seated on gaily-upholstered saddles jingled past my humble donkey, and bowed their apologies at taking the road before

me. Politeness is more than pleasant; it is the oil essential which allows the wheels of life to run smoothly. At last I reached my Chinese inn and dismounted. A gong announced my entry, and the servitors rushed to await my commands. Soon hot water was brought, tea was brewed, fresh matting spread on the floor in answer to my orders, my blankets and skins laid out on the k'ang.

After you have drunk tea till you can drink no more, you order your meal, for the drink precedes the meal in China. What would I have? Chinese maccaroni and flour dumplings were the dishes I favoured, and three ancestral goose's eggs were added to the feast. What more could mortal man desire, provided always that his stomach is duly salted and attuned to native food. Having eaten and smoked, I stretched out on my skins, mightily content. It was better than a Russian hostelry, and I was soon asleep.

"Fine brushes for sale, fine Western soap, and the best self-illuminating matches." This was the cry which mixed itself in my dreams and finally woke me up. At the door of my room stood a lusty Manchurian pedlar with the wares he was so ardently crying strapped to his back, and with a face bronzed to a deep chocolate by years of exposure to the wind and sun. His head was covered with a peaked cap of soft, brown felt; his wadded blue coat was fastened in at the waist by a red girdle; his trousers were a deep claret red, a colour much affected in Manchuria, and on his feet were the

peculiar Manchurian boots—the wula—which, when stuffed with soft grass, make almost the warmest covering there is against bitter cold. A typical Manchurian this, and as different in outward respect from the Chinaman in ordinary, as is a Scotchman in kilt from your trousered lowlander. His speech was also a treat to listen to; tone and rhythm were the realisation of the ideals of a Thomas Wade, who has revealed to men how they may learn to speak to perfection the most difficult language in the world by following a system. A pedlar, after all, is a man to be cultivated, for he may wander almost anywhere he wills in a Chinese city, and he holds converse with all manner of people. So I proceed to pump him, having first purchased a "fine brush," and thereby successfully stopped him from urging on me his other unexampled wares. His answers were plain, satisfactory, and apparently reliable.

Before the winter of 1900-1901, that is, after the Boxer trouble, four columns of Russian troops had entered Tsitsihar, their combined numbers being about 8,000 men. Although Tsitsihar offered no resistance, the Military Governor having fled, the Russians used their rifles and guns against the city, and reduced the population to a state of panic. Then they left abruptly for the south, Tsitsihar being only provided with a garrison of a few hundred artillery and infantry. These were from that day quartered in the Chinese arsenal and powder mills, in the telegraph offices, and around the

Military Governor's Yamen. Sometimes this number of men was increased suddenly, without any apparent reason, and sometimes again reduced until there seemed hardly any left. Of course, this was the old Russian practice over again of shifting and re-shifting troops from place to place, so as both to baffle any attempts at estimating the actual number of men in Manchuria, and to bluff the ignorant into supposing that Russia had really overwhelming forces at her disposal. Continuing, my friend informed me that the Chinese officials had returned to Tsitsihar over two years ago, and that the jurisdiction of the city was, to-day, nominally in their hands. There were, however, sixty-five soldiers at the telegraph offices, and a guard of forty at the Military Governor's Yamen. The arsenals were likewise still in the hands of the Russians, but there were a number of returned Chinese soldiery there, who were armed with "Mo-so" (Mauser) rifles, and who were being drilled by their own officers. The city gates had likewise been handed back to the Chinese, and Chinese military police guarded them. This is what my pedlar told me, and as I passed the rest of the day sitting on the shafts of a cart and investigating, I was able to verify nearly all his statements. Meanwhile, I sent for the inn-keeper, and asked him to have my Chinese card sent to the Governor's Yamen. He did so, and within twenty minutes I got a prompt return card, and a polite reply that I could not be seen.

I did not wish to press the point, so I went to call on

another official, to whom I had a direct introduction from a Moukden official, and I succeeded in seeing him almost immediately. This man's manner was an explanation of everything. From what he said, I have reason to believe that the Russian military authorities have directly threatened that they will take the lives of every high Chinese official in Manchuria in the event of war being declared; arguing that they attribute the present crisis entirely to the failure of the Chinese local officials to cooperate with them in hoodwinking the world. Of course, this is merely a threat, but it is a pretty significant one, after what Manchuria has recently seen. This Taotai begged me to desist from calling on prominent officials in Manchuria, as it only got them into trouble with the Russian military authorities, and I could find out more from non-officials. So, after an hour's talk, I left this official's house with one settled conviction: that if war comes, hundreds of Russians (unless they are careful) will be murdered in their beds or sleeping places, at the instigation of men who boil at their present impotency and hate the Slav with a deadly hatred. But there is one important point to be here noted by the intelligent reader. Just as, in India during the Mutiny, only the sepoy rose against the British raj, and the other classes were not affected to any great extent, so in in Manchuria only the Chinese officials hate the Russian and long for his expulsion. The people at large have forgotten bitter 1900, or if they have not forgotten, they have at least hidden away all re-

membrances deep down in their hearts, knowing that the Boxer was a madman ; and further, the Russian soldiery in Manchuria is such a mere handful, and is so inferior in intelligence to the ordinary Chinaman, that the latter does not believe for one moment in its permanence, or in its ability to restrain the people once Manchuria's twenty millions of hardy folk find its presence irksome. Then again, as I have already written repeatedly, the Russian is only seen along the railway, and is thus in no way in intimate relations with the people at large, nor can he in any way interfere with them without prompt retaliation.

As in the case of all great agricultural countries, such as the United States, the real strength of Manchuria does not lie in the towns and cities, but in the enormous rural districts, containing foodstuffs and cattle sufficient for endless armies, and a population so scattered as to make an effective control by aliens an impossibility. The Russian Government has foolishly supposed, or has wished to have it supposed, that by purchasing influence through the political agency of the Russo-Chinese Bank, in half-a-dozen towns adjacent to the railway, and by scattering a few thousand men along the railway, they have Manchuria entirely and irrevocably within their grasp. A more patent fallacy it is impossible to conceive. One instance alone will show thoughtful people a terrible hole in the seemingly perfect armour of Russian bluff. There are not half-a-dozen Russians in the whole of Manchuria who have a sufficient

knowledge of the northern Chinese dialect to allow them to conduct business in person with the native mandarinate or with the common people without the aid of Russian-speaking Chinese interpreters. These interpreters are almost invariably Shantung Chinese of the most inferior class, are deficient in a knowledge of their own language, and are therefore looked upon with contempt by their own people. For to be without a proper classical education is as bad for a Chinaman as the dropping of h's is for an Englishman.

But there is still more to observe. Chinese local officials collect dues, taxes, and likin, administer justice, perform every function and duty as they have always done and account to no one except their superiors; Chinese provincial trade is carried on entirely by carts or by river as it has been of yore without any great regard for the railway, which it indeed ignores completely; and finally the Russian rouble is only accepted to be promptly sent away and cashed into silver dollars or sycee. That is to say, it has no part in the commercial life of the people. But upon all these things I have more to say separately.

Meanwhile, my excellent carter had driven me to the telegraph office, where I wished to try a little experiment. At the door lounged a couple of dirty Russian soldiers, who stared at me with astonished eyes. Where the devil I came from, they evidently wanted to know. Going through the big gate I came to the office. Fresh astonishment met me

there. The operators were Russians and Chinese mixed. Although the 8th of October, the great Evacuation Day, had already passed, no attempt had evidently been made to hand back the telegraph office to the Chinese authorities. I gravely asked one of the Chinese operators, a Cantonese, for a form, and, choosing a London address at random, I wrote out a most incendiary message about the condition of affairs in Manchuria. The operator knew some English, and shook his head doubtfully over my wire. Excitement had now reached fever pitch among the Russian employees, and they eagerly asked for a translation from their Chinese *confrère*. When he had given it to them, I thought my dearest wish was about to be fulfilled. I was longing to be arrested, and for a time it looked very much as if I would be. I waited quietly to see what would finally happen, and I was at length told that my wire was "out of order" and would be referred to the Russian Commissary; that my Tsitsihar address must be handed in, and that I must not leave the city. I pretended to be justly indignant, and refused to make a deposit to cover the cost of a wire which I knew would never be sent. Finally I escaped, vowing many foolish things, and I supposed the "Tsitsihar Office of the Imperial Chinese Telegraphs in Military Occupation," as it is called, is still cursing me, for I left at daybreak the next morning.

From the telegraph office I went to look up the Russo-Chinese Bank. There was nothing very

characteristic about this establishment, which was merely a semi-European building erected to the greater glory of the travelling rouble, and so I drove on to the arsenal. Here, again, there was nothing much to be seen. A few Russian soldiers, a few Chinese soldiers, a lot of suspended building operations, that was all. Briefly put, I had exhausted Tsitsihar and its possibilities, and was already longing to get away. In Tsitsihar it is the same story as elsewhere—a few Russian soldiery to overawe a countless Chinese population. I directed my steps, or rather those of my mule, to the offices of the "Northern Districts Fire Wheelship Company," otherwise the Northern Steamship Company—and said I wanted a passage to Petuna. Petuna is a brigand city, the home of the cream of the "Hunghutzu," or red beards—according to the Russian authorities, a place where no man may go. The Hunghutzu, however, are not very dangerous, and are warranted not to kill so long as you pay up promptly. In answer to a fat Chinese clerk's warning, I assured the "Northern Steamship Company" that I was languishing for excitement, and the only thing I asked of them was to take me down the Nonni quickly. For twenty taels I purchased all the cabin accommodation there was to be had on a big junk that was being towed down the next morning. I was told to pack and be all ready that night, as I must go down to the river immediately the city gates were opened in the morning—else lose my

boat. Everything seemed arranged; I got home, packed, purchased three days' rations, hired a two-mule cart, and went to sleep in my clothes. There is but little ceremony in Manchuria, and it gets wilder the further one gets away from Port Arthur, which is itself wild enough for any man.

CHAPTER XV

THE DEFEAT OF THE TRAVELLING ROUBLE

When the Russians first came to Manchuria they were ostensibly only concerned with railway building, and empires, for the nonce, were not on the carpet. It is true that some months after the Liaotung Retrocession Convention, which gave back southern Manchuria to China, and only eight months after the last Japanese troops had been withdrawn from the scenes of their recent triumphs, the world was startled by the publication in Shanghai of the so-called Cassini Convention, which purported to lease certain ports in Manchuria and China to Russia, in addition to granting the right of building a railway through the three eastern provinces. But that is another story, which will be dealt with separately. What is certain, is that in September of the year 1896 the Russo-Chinese Bank—that mighty engine of the travelling rouble—signed an agreement with the Peking authorities whereby Russia acquired the right to form a company, to be called the Chinese Eastern Railway Company, for the purpose of building a railway

through Manchuria from east to west; that is, from the trans-Baikal province in the west to the frontier of Russian Primorsk in the east.

This demand of the Petersburg bureaucrats, readily assented to by China still smarting under the agony of the crushing Japanese defeat, was in itself not unreasonable. The Trans-Siberian Railway, so boldly planned to traverse thousands of miles of barren steppes and ultra-inhospitable lands, in order to link up the Russian possessions on the Pacific with the other domains of the mighty Czar, would have to come to an abrupt halt at Stretensk; for beyond this point the physical difficulties to be overcome by the Russian engineers were so great that, even if their skill were sufficient, the State coffers would never bear the strain. It was absolutely necessary, therefore, that permission be somehow obtained to run the Russian railway for a thousand versts through Chinese territory. If this could be done, hundreds of millions of roubles would be saved, the line considerably shortened, and finally a concession obtained which would be something in the nature of a first charge on northern Manchuria. So that pleasantly unknown quantity, the Russo-Chinese Bank, under the presidency of a Slav empire builder, Prince Uktomsky, came to the rescue with the results already described.

On the 28th August, 1897, therefore, the first sod of the long-dreamt-of railway was cut with great ceremony on the eastern frontier of Kirin province, only a hundred miles or so distant from the Pacific strong-

place, Vladivostock, and the breasts of Russian bureaucrats palpitated with secret exultation. At last this mysterious China—for China is far more mysterious to imaginative Russians than it is to common-sense Englishmen—was being eaten into, and who knew what the future might not hold? Who, indeed!

But this was but the beginning, for Russia had so far only the right to traverse Manchuria from east to west, and the warm seas and the ice-free harbours were still eight hundred versts to the south of the conceded strategic line. The Russian Bear, however, does not have to be periodically galvanised into action like the British Lion, for he possesses a fixed and definite policy, the key-note of which is "Vorwaerts, Marsch." He may not know, it is true, when each step is going to be taken, but at least he knows that each forward step is but the forerunner of another such step, and that of permanent retreat there can be no question.

In the winter of 1897–98, we find some Russian men-of-war in the harbour of poor, dismantled Port Arthur, helpless and apparently hopeless since the Japanese war, and therefore quite at the mercy of the first-comer. As luck would have it, however, some British war-dogs also steamed most casually into the harbour, having left their woodwork for safe-keeping at Chefoo, and with their guns cast loose ready for action. It is curious how convincing are trivialities; for the Russian ships had no sooner seen the cross of St. George than they were

persuaded that they must seek a new anchorage elsewhere. Everybody knows what happened after that, but it is nevertheless good and proper that Englishmen should be reminded. The telegraphs ticked, an order was flashed, and miracle of miracles, the British disappeared. Historians will weep over this cowardly retreat, and date from it the beginning of England's dependence on others in China after a century-old independence. But this is going away from the present story.

In March, 1898, therefore, Port Arthur and the Kuantung peninsula were leased to Russia—a fit reward for a bluff of bluffs—the right was given to connect the Manchurian railway, planned until then only to run from east to west, with the new Russian possessions in the south, and the great Manchurian question was officially born.

You will perhaps ask what all this has to do with the travelling rouble and its defeat, with which appropriate title I have headed this chapter. Everything, because the railway, the Russo-Chinese Bank, and the rouble are almost synonymous terms in the Far East, and so intimately are they connected, and so well are they planned to work together, that you cannot explain one without mentioning the other in the fullest detail. If you take any one of the three away, the others can have no separate existence. In brief, they are a three-headed Medusa that turn their threatening faces on poor China, and either enchant or quell her with their looks. If China is recalcitrant, then

is only the alluring face of the rouble to be seen softening all hearts and turning away wrath. If China is ready for a deal, then up trots the famous bank, draws up parchment deeds full of dismal significance for China, and forces them on impotent mandarins. And finally, when all is ready, then, "Brumm, Marsch," dig up fresh embankments, lay down more rails, the trumpets are merrily sounding the advance, and Russia is moving forward towards the final goal of her desires.

All through 1898 and 1899 and up to May, 1900, the digging up of soil and the laying down of rails went on uninterruptedly in Manchuria. At first there was no question of the travelling rouble being used to pay Shantung workmen ; for the Chinaman generally spits on paper money issued outside its own home district and understands it not. Therefore good, clean ringing Mexican and other dollars had to be bought up by the shipload by the Russian Administration, doled out to thousands and tens of thousands of workers, coolies, and contractors engaged on the construction of the iron road, and finally bought back by the ever-present Russo-Chinese Bank with rouble credits after much journeying in rough palms. This went on for months, if not for years, and immense quantities of subsidiary and large silver coins had to be transported ever farther afield as the work progressed. This could not be accomplished without considerable danger, for you cannot send hundreds of thousands of dollars through unsettled districts

without risking to lose a good many in the process. So all the time this was going on, the travelling rouble was dying to be accepted by Chinese in lieu of silver, although the astute railway builders saw each day bring them no nearer to a solution of the problem perplexing them.

Meanwhile, in Port Arthur the rouble could act in a more arbitrary fashion. Immense works were being built, and tens of thousands of coolies were being employed, who were simply paid in paper money, whether they liked it or not. These latter found to their astonishment and delight that, by virtue of some mysterious law, of which they had not suspected the existence, Russian paper was better than Chinese silver, inasmuch as its value did not fluctuate day by day. So they took the paper and hoarded it, and when winter came they scattered to their homes, cashing their savings whenever they came across a foreign bank, and spreading the news far and wide that roubles were good and serviceable. This was before the Boxer trouble, and from the Boxers everything is now dated.

Then the Boxers came, tore up rails, tore up all that had been so painstakingly built up. Everything stopped as if by magic ; the Russians fled in every direction, and were not thought of for several entire weeks. Then retribution came. All September, October, and November of the Boxer year found Russian troops pouring into Manchuria in big continuous streams, which gave off little trickles of men in every direction. Division, brigade,

battalion, and company commanders had but one currency in their military chests—rouble-notes—and anybody who was sufficiently lucky to be offered payment and refused Russian paper was a fool, and could go and hang himself.

So by 1901 the rouble had a very firm and enviable position, and bid fair to become master of the economical situation in Manchuria. The Chinese Eastern Railway, which was being rebuilt at a truly phenomenal rate, now jumped into the fray, and arbitrarily, and without any right to do so, decreed that henceforth passenger tickets and freight charges must be paid for in rouble notes without distinction. Up till then, you see, the Harbin Railway Administration had not felt sufficiently strong to tackle the Chinese on what is a matter of life and death to every one of them as soon as they are old enough to walk—that is, on the dollar question. But the presence of large bodies of occupation troops made the Slav foolishly confident, and caused him to commit a first great *faux-pas*, which was to be the ruin of the rouble. Tell a Chinaman he has got to do something that you have neither the organisation nor the power to make him do, and you are simply inviting disaster. Above all, when it is a question of the Chinaman's pocket, act most warily and be warned in time.

Here it is necessary to explain that the real currency of Manchuria, as in other parts of China, is merely copper cash, not the small copper cash of the central and southern provinces, but the so-called

large cash of the north. As these cash are of too small a denomination in which to conduct commercial transactions of any magnitude, it may be said that the "tiao" is the unit of value in the big market places. What is the tiao? The tiao is simply a certain number of copper cash. In North China, or, say, the metropolitan province of Chihli, it is one hundred large cash; in Newchwang it is one hundred and sixty; in Moukden more, and finally in Kirin several hundred cash go to the tiao, and, roughly, in this last-named place, two tiao equal one provincial dollar. But there is another point to note. The tiao is an imaginary coin; in fact it is no coin at all. It is simply a multiple of copper cash settled on long ago in the dim past and varying according to the district in which you happen to be, and is not coined into silver pieces. To simplify matters, Chinese bankers in Moukden, Kirin, and in fact in every mart of importance, issue paper tiao notes of various denominations, and these notes correspond almost exactly to the country bank notes of European countries. These notes are therefore only negotiable in their districts of issue. If, for instance, I have got a thousand tiao in Moukden notes, say twenty pounds sterling, and I propose to go into Kirin city to buy produce, I must first cash my notes in Moukden and get a Kirin credit in silver taels; that is, an order on a Kirin bank to pay me so many local taels' weight of silver on demand. Arrived in Kirin, I present my draft and am told that my credit in Kirin tiao at

the current rate of the day is so and so and so much.

Are you beginning to see what a hornet's nest the Russians were disturbing when they attempted, unauthorisedly, to tamper with the Chinaman's birthright, the exchange question and the vast profits it brings him? However, there is yet another point.

In 1897, I think it was, mints to coin dollars of the same nominal weight and fineness as the Mexican dollars were opened in Kirin city and in Moukden. Unfortunately, no figures are available to show what number of coins were yearly placed on the markets, but there is some reason to suppose, although the work was very intermittent, that the totals ran into millions. More attention, however, was given to the minting of subsidiary coins, that is, five, ten, twenty, and fifty cent pieces, than to dollars, because adulteration and short weight are not so easily detected or so objected to in minor coins as they are in big ones, and the mint profits are therefore more secure. These mints were opened with one object, that of supplying convenient tokens for the ever-growing minor trade and traffic between foreigners and Chinese in Manchuria.

Reviewing rapidly what has been written above, the reader will see at once that the real money of Manchuria is the large copper cash; that for commercial transactions, the tiao, a certain multiple of copper cash is the value used; that for petty dealings of a semi-foreign character minted dollars

are locally employed, and that, finally, for settling adverse trade balances, silver bullion or sycee is shipped from one point to another. The rouble was, therefore, in every way an interloper, at first tolerated by the Chinese bankers because they could squeeze a beloved exchange profit out of it, whether they were buying or selling. Once, however, they saw their entire monetary system threatened by the arbitrary decrees of Russian bureaucrats, they prepared for battle, and when the dollar-loving Chinaman prepares for battle, look out for squalls.

During the first part of 1901 nothing much was noticeable, but after the evacuation protocol of April, 1902, was signed in Peking, ominous rumours became suddenly current in every tea-house and hong in Manchuria. The Russians were going, everybody said, and were leaving their useless paper money behind in millions of innocent Chinese hands. Who guaranteed this paper? What was this paper, and was there no redress?

These were the questions that were being freely asked and nervously answered, and the Chinese bankers, the conscious instigators of false rumours untraceable to anyone, smiled quietly in their back parlours, knowing that they would succeed. Briefly put, the battle, although just commenced, was already won. Distrust and suspicion, those twin fiends that conquer the strongest, had taken hold of the multitudes, and the game was absolutely in the hands of a thousand native banking people. For

although the Russian did not probably in the first instance dream of forcing his paper money on to Manchuria, events so shaped themselves that he thought he could use the rouble as a powerful weapon of conquest. Manchuria had a Russian railway; Russian guards everywhere; Russo-Chinese Banks in many important towns; Russian authorities controlling the seaports; in fact, it seemed like Russia herself to purblind employees who travelled up and down the Empire of the five-foot track. Therefore, why not make an end of all pretence at once, and spread the famous paper money, of which there is apparently no end, stamped with the effigy of an omnipotent Czar, and symbolical of Russia's victory all over the country?

But, as I have already said, it is best not to go too far in a country the size of France and Germany rolled into one, and withal possessed of a population to whom money is as the breath of life. Two years, or even one year ago, tens of millions of rouble notes were hoarded in every native bank in Manchuria; to-day, who will find me a million?

A year ago the Harbin Railway Administration addressed a query to St. Petersburg as to what should be done with the millions of silver dollars, and hundreds of millions of copper cash, stored in the railway city, and representing railway receipts during pre-Boxer days. The answer promptly came: ship away the dollars, and keep the copper cash pending further instructions.

So the dollars were duly sent away. A million or so came to Shanghai, were sold on the local market only to be promptly bought up by native houses from the North that have Shanghai branches, and shipped back to Moukden and Newchwang inside of a fortnight. Some of the dollars went to Tientsin and were back within forty-eight hours in Manchuria. The Russian was vainly attempting in a most puerile fashion to kill the minted dollar in Manchuria; which, after all, is itself something of an intruder in the country. If such small success attended the fight against a semi-foreign coin, what were the chances against the elusive and imaginary tael, the still more fictitious tiao, and the very matter-of-fact copper cash? Absolutely nil, of course.

So to-day we find a conservative English banker estimating that nearly seventy million paper roubles are exported to Shanghai from Manchuria by Chinese merchants and changed into silver dollars or silver credits; native bankers stating that more than this amount goes to Tientsin and Chefoo, carried there by Chinese hands, and once more promptly cashed into beloved silver. What does all this mean? That the rouble is entirely discredited by astute Chinese, and that whether the Russo-Chinese Bank in Manchuria makes its payments in paper or not is a matter of entire indifference; for no sooner is paper received than prompt measures are taken to cash it into something more finite than a mere piece of parchment

bearing an excellent likeness of his Imperial Majesty the Czar.

And with this huge drain going on every Russian enterprise is being rapidly crippled. Harbin, to take one instance only, has spent all its money and, what is more, all its credit in building itself new houses capable of more effectively resisting the terrible winter. The Chinaman is the only man who has profited by this, for although the houses are nearly all ready, there is no one with money enough to live in them, so slack has business become. The roubles have all disappeared and been hidden in the coffers of the Russo-Chinese Bank, alone able, among a host of would-be empire builders, to purchase back in silver what has been emitted in paper. In both Port Arthur and Dalny it is the same story. Tight money, or no money at all, are the cries one everywhere hears. Where have all those fabulous tons of paper roubles disappeared to? Where, indeed!

So the real commercial life of Manchuria rolls on uninterruptedly in spite of the Russian invasion, in spite of Imperial decrees, in spite of every attempt. Chink, chink, go the silver dollars; chunk, chunk, the heavy sycee of pure silver; clank, clank, the iron and copper cash of a people who understand business; and these sounds are full of ominous meaning for the incautious Slav. The railway, it is true, must still be paid for in roubles, but then in no country in the world is the native such an adept at exchange banking as in the land of the blue

gown. If you want 100 roubles or even 10,000, you can buy them almost anywhere in Manchuria, for Chinese dealers are quite ready to make a profit, and the soldiery are being daily fleeced of more millions. But, though you purchase roubles with ease, you are simply buying a foreign currency which has no more entered into the commercial life of the people than the golden sovereign has at Hong Kong. And then in Hong Kong England has at least some trade, which is more than can be said of the Russian in Manchuria.

The fact is the Chinaman is inordinately a lover of the tangible. He likes his money in solid coins or solid bullion, even if they are all debased or fallen in value ; that is something that he can handle, and that is intelligible to the merest child. It is true that he may conduct huge transactions in mere credits ; but in every case he knows that differences and balances are going to be settled in solid bullion payments. The rouble, therefore, has had its fling, and after a half-hearted attempt to oust the Manchurian currencies, it is condemned like everything else Russian in Manchuria to the dreary existence of a railway life.

A year ago in Moukden you could put down your paper money anywhere unchallenged. To-day bring out a fifty-rouble note and your bland Chinaman asks you to be good enough to wait a minute while he runs and changes. It is true that the wily Jap has somewhat contributed to this unkindly suspicion, for quite unauthorisedly he took upon himself to

make up for the tightness in the Northern markets by opening private rouble factories in Osaka, and flooding the place with truly excellent likenesses of the great Czar's money. But apart from this, the local Chinese have been asking, with all the rest of the world, how long this enormous Manchurian expenditure, which has made them richer than they ever were before, can go on without bringing an almighty crash; and they are quite right to ask the question. Russia must have spent five or six hundred million roubles if she has spent a hundred in Manchuria during the past few years, and most of this has gone into Chinese pockets. The Chinaman has surely had his revenge in the sweetest way possible for the brutalities of 1900, by killing the rouble and pocketing the change. The political crisis may be settled one way or the other, but it can have no influence on one thing—the fate of the rouble. The rouble is already defeated and paid for. The Chinese have triumphed with a cash victory in spite of a material defeat. Russia may pin down Manchuria with her bayonets, but the Chinaman has his hands in the pockets of the Ruski soldiery and civilianry, and will starve them all to death when he likes.

CHAPTER XVI

DOWN THE GOLDEN NONNI

Luck was against me from the very beginning, for the fates had apparently decreed in the middle of the night that I should suffer many uncomfortable jolts before I was permitted to reach the river. . . . I had gone to bed early, at seven o'clock; that is, I had kicked off my boots and stretched on my k'ang. Everybody knows what a "k'ang" is, or if they do not, I will enlighten them. It is simply a hollow brick and timber couch, built into the room, backing against one side and running the whole length of your palatial apartment. Generally speaking, the k'ang is about six feet broad and ten or twelve feet long, and raised about two feet off the ground; on it you sit, you sleep, receive your guests, eat your dinner,—in fact, do everything—for there are few chairs in a Chinese inn. In summer, if you are a stranger, you will sneer at the k'ang and ridicule its glaring primitiveness. In winter, you will worship the k'ang and its creator, for it keeps you from becoming a block of ice, and is at once your hot water bottle, your stove, your

steam-heater and your reviver when you are numbed nigh unto death by the bitter north wind.

And all this is accomplished with such simplicity. In the courtyard outside there is a square hole opening into the hollow of your k'ang. Huge sheaths of brittle-dry kaoliang stalks are thrust in, set on fire, and the hole closed up. The flames and the smoke—for smoke is very hot, and is only properly utilised by Europeans in the spiral-chimneyed Russian stove—heat up the bricks of your k'ang and keep you warm for an indefinite number of hours. The cost is infinitesimal and the result excellent, except that sleeping on a heated k'ang is apt to give the beginner a headache for a few days. As I was saying, I had gone to bed too early, for the inn people had heated me up at seven, and at two in the morning I woke chilled to the bone. The reason was not far to seek. It had begun to blow from the north. In China proper the blow from the north is the signal that all one's summer troubles are over; in China improper—that is Manchuria since the Russians have come—prepare to weep and be grievously distressed when it blows from the north, for you are about to suffer an agony of nose and eyes and finger-tips not easily surpassed. But at least you have one statistical satisfaction in Northern Manchuria. The winter minimum of fifty degrees below zero Fahrenheit, or, say, eighty degrees of frost, is almost the lowest in the world. Console yourself with that, if you can.

As I shouted vainly at my door for slumbering

inn-people at two in the morning, I tried to comfort myself with the thought that compared to a January or February wind, what I was experiencing was nothing—in fact, almost summer heat; but still my teeth went on chattering. After a while, I gave it up. It is useless, absolutely useless, shouting at a Chinaman to wake him. Even lusty blows on the stomach, a somewhat susceptible spot in the case of a white man, will only make him groan slightly. There is but one effective means, cold water, and alas! all the cold water in this part of the world had been converted into ice during the last few hours. . . . So I went to bed again, cursing exceedingly and longing for the gray dawn. After several centuries had apparently slowly gone by, I struck a match and looked at my watch; a quarter past three said my time-piece, and no one would stir for an hour or two yet. The thought made me desperate, and I decided on an instant action. Two tins of Epps's comforting cocoa were staring at me with pained labels; they should come to my succour. A candle was soon lighted, my boots were put on. I shook myself and was dressed with that celerity which is the Russian birthright. Gingerly, I made my way to the kitchen, in terror lest the inn-dogs should wake up and mistake me for a Chinaman. All who know the Mongolian and Manchurian dog, which is quite different from the Chinese wonk of damnable memory, will sympathise with me. The Mongolian dog is the size of a young donkey and as fierce as a wolf—half-a-dozen of them acting in concert can

make you feel more miserable than anything short of an earthquake; and I was not feeling exactly like dog-fighting. However, I was at last favoured; I reached the kitchen in safety, lighted a fire, made some boiling water, and drank cocoa until I hated the taste of it.

Meanwhile, outside, things were stoking up, or rather, stoking down. The wind had veered to the west, and in addition to the cold, there was the dust. The Sahara has an unenviable reputation in the matter of dust storms, but it can hardly surpass North China, Manchuria, or Mongolia when they are doing their best. Mine was evidently not to be the common-place dust storm, which is simply the whirling about of more or less local dust, but the veritable and inimitable variety, in which the red dust of the Gobi and the larger brickbats of Mongolia are impartially mingled and blown down your throat, eyes, ears, mouth, and silted into your entire system, until you are reduced to a pulpy impotence and blasphemy, the like of which you have never conceived in your wildest dreams. But this was not to be the sum total of my woes.

Presently, daylight actually did come, a very bleary, drunken-eyed sort of a daylight, it is true, but still it was undeniably daylight. Carters and other people woke up too, scratched themselves, and were obviously not enchanted with the prospect. However, plentiful abuse made the carter at last start. Oh, that drive to the river!

It was not far, but it was very bitter. With nose, eyes, and teeth clotted thick, I at last arrived at the banks of the Nonni and found my junk. My cabin was, of course, appropriated by someone else, for in China what is yours is also everybody else's.

My junk was a two-masted, brand new yellow boat of some thirty tons burden, smelling abominably of bean oil and hailing from Kirin—the inland dockyard of Manchuria. We carried a stevedore of sorts, who seemed to think he had a half-share in my cabin, until I made him change his mind quite suddenly. Two women, with high Manchu head-dresses, red cheeks, and speech as clear as bells, were the only other passengers, and although I cordially invited them to take the stevedore's vacated place, they modestly refused, and stowed themselves forward.

Alongside of us lay the dirtiest little launch I have ever seen. She was piled high with stoke-hold wood, grimy with smoke, filthy with dust. A fat coolie was splitting wood with a rusty chopper, and constantly cursing the relatives, ancestors, and female slaves of a person unknown, who had apparently sneaked off and eternally insulted him by leaving him work to do. No other sign of life was there on the launch, only the flying dust mixed with the steam and smoke that must have been leaking out of the scrap-heap engine-room, and made me think we were fated never to start. It was now nine o'clock in the morning, and I had been up five

hours, so I spoke to the junk-people sternly, and told them if there was no haste, there would likewise be no money at the end. Then men were fetched with yells out of the mud buildings along the brown banks; neighbouring junk-crews gazed at us curiously, for we were starting with entirely unprecedented celerity. The man chopping wood stopped chopping, and lowered himself bodily into the engine-room—save the mark!—with an armful of his fuel. Chunk! chunk! went log after log into the fire; some sparks flew up. Presently, the captain of the launch sprang from nowhere, loafed along the deck and looked in an exhausted manner at his diminutive wheel-house. Suddenly, he turned round on me, gasped with astonishment, changed his expression as if struck by lightning, and finally held out his hand, although six feet of muddy water separated his grimy launch from my highly-polished junk. "Hullo," he said, by way of introduction. "Hullo," I answered laconically, and waited for developments. Never be surprised in Manchuria, for it has been turned so upside down of late that the unexpected always happens. "How fashion, Englishman come this side?" he finally said in his elegant pidgin. That is the worst of it; your stupid Chinaman can always tell an Englishman from a Russian as easily as you can tell a Scotchman from an Italian. "How fashion you come this die," I answered, countering and gazing suspiciously at his tell-tale Shanghai mechanic's cap. After much parleying, his story

was duly evolved, and it presented no new features. In fact, it was the very old story about "littee trouble" culminating in the "foreign man wanchee catchee my," and ending somewhat abruptly with the explanatory, "I think so come this side more better; by'm by'm all man forget, can go home."

Thus is Manchuria rapidly becoming a far Eastern Alsatia for China, Siberia, and Japan; a place where all men may run to, and be most completely and thoroughly lost for the time being.

After the acquisition of this new friend, all went most excellently. Our tow-boat launch sheered off for the captain to try the engines. At first, there seemed to be a little difference of opinion between the engine-room levers and the noble ship's propeller, for it would not revolve. But the fat coolie again came to the rescue. Arming himself with a long pole, he bent over the stern sheets and assisted the propeller to start by shoving it round. After that, who will say the Chinese do not understand machinery? Soon everything was ready. A rope was cast to us, we made fast and off we started. In five minutes, there was nothing to be seen of the crowds of junks, sampans, and mud buildings that mark the riverine port of Tsitsihar. The dust whirls became less and less as we got away from the shores and steamed peacefully on the river. The crews disappeared, as all crews do once their ship is out of port; the steersman of our junk, squatting thoughtfully alongside his huge

wooden tiller, was the only man alive, and he seemed to be dreaming. After an hour or so, we passed under the huge Nonni railway bridge, not much smaller than the one over the Sungari at Harbin, and as it faded away in the distance I realised that for some days the Russian would be a myth, swallowed up by the huge Manchurian territories and surely most unreal. At twelve o'clock, I realised that I was very dirty, and what is more, very hungry, so I ate roughly, and sluiced Nonni water over me. It is only by travelling that you learn how little and how badly any man can eat, without feeling a whit the worse for it—that is, if he has an optimistic stomach.

Thus, I travelled down the muddy and golden Nonni, for the Nonni is golden at times. As you go down the river, at your leisurely six or seven miles an hour, the country round about you changes in a most surprising manner. For fifty miles from Tsitsihar, far beyond your right bank, you see distant mountains, which advance and retreat like the marshalling and manœuvring of giant armies. Beyond them lie the great Hsing-an mountains, through which the railway twists and turns, seeking the easiest path, forced to content itself with a temporary way until the tunnel is complete.

Engineers say that this tunnel is a triumph of man's skill, for it curls up into the bowels of the mountains, and down the other side in a shape resembling the figure 8, and its approaching success is the fit reward for a daring attempt in the middle

of wildernesses. Still farther on, beyond the Hsing-an, are two hundred miles of rough lands, where scarce any man lives. True, there is one town, or was one town, Khailar—what a barbaric ring it has!—an outpost, garrisoned once by Manchurian soldiery until the Boxer trouble. Then Cossack horsemen swept into it, and with fire and sword chastised celestial ignorance. Eighty miles from Khailar is the true Russian frontier, and at a place called Manchuria Station, on the Argun river, which rolls out of Lake Dalai-nor, distant only a few thousand yards from the iron track, you finally pass from immense Manchuria into still more Gargantuan Siberia. That is what you would see if you could jump the vision of your eyes as far as your thoughts so easily go. On the left bank of the Nonni, you see mud and sand plain, and hills stretching away into infinity. Twenty miles from Tsitsihar, there are formidable sand hills on your left; your launch puffs and pulls, and onward you go until you come to high riverless plains. You see hardly a living person, or a hut, for the villages, such as they are, are ten, twenty, or thirty miles inland, scattered along the great post-road which runs from Tsitsihar *via* Petuna, to Kirin city. These post-roads are the chains which connect uncivilised Manchuria with the moderately civilised, and on them labour, or are supposed to labour, the political convicts of the eighteen provinces. Thus we went on hour after hour, until far after dark. Then as navigation was getting harder, the launch pulled up, and

was tied to the bank. Everybody got off, walked about, and talked. The mechanic skipper accepted a cigar, skilfully bit off the end, and told me our run. Two hundred li in ten hours. Pretty good going, all things considered.

The second day was very much like the first day, except that we started a good deal earlier. The evening before I had turned in before nine o'clock, after concluding a small drinking entertainment, to which I had bidden my friends, the two captains. Vodka and tea were the beverages of the night, and these, paltry as they may seem, unloosened the tongues of men who were tired of unending voyages up and down lonely rivers, and were highly willing to talk. What I learnt about the general situation, and about the real feeling in Manchuria, was very interesting, but what pleased me most was the remarkably intelligent and accurate manner in which these two Chinamen, both really as much strangers in Manchuria as myself, summed up things from every point of view, and seemed to understand the why and the wherefore of many things that are most involved. Just as it is always Russia in the Far Eastern Press since the crisis, so once you are quiet with Chinese in Manchuria do they turn to the absorbing topic.

As it is not uncommon in the north, the night brought a change in the weather. The vile westerly winds dropped suddenly, and when I woke up, somewhere about five o'clock in the morning, cloudless blue skies greeted and smiled at me—entranced me.

We were already gliding smoothly and rapidly down stream, tugged willingly by our dirty little launch, and the world looked so peaceful and happy that one's spirits jumped up with mercurial rapidity. Presently the sun rose, huge, magnificent, and lusty, as he never is in wilted South China. The hoar frost about the banks disappeared as if by magic, and the nipping, clear air felt like so much nectar in one's lungs as soon as one's numbed body was warmed by the bright rays—and life was worth living. You do not wonder at the hardy health of Manchurian corps, Manchurian beasts of burden, and Manchurian men and women when you have breathed the air of this Chinese Canada ; it is too splendid for words. The crew were as happy as mudlarks, and rough jests were bandied to and fro as the men sat and drank and ate. Splendid fellows these, all tall and shapely, and with faces burnt by the sun and tanned by the wind until they were as dark as the lighter-hued natives of India.

To the right of us, due west, the mountains and hills of the day before had now disappeared, and in their place were the rich-rolling grass-lands of Mongolia. We were fast approaching the River Cholo, the junction of which with the Nonni is one of the theoretical boundary points of Mongolia, although the Mongolian nomads, as a matter of fact, have always occupied the country on the left bank of the lower Nonni. On this left bank the scenery was most curious. Instead of mud, sand largely predominated here, and sometimes when the river made

a sharp bend, huge sandstone cliffs frowned down on us, fifty or a hundred feet high. From the roof of the stern sheets, built up to an enormous height, as is the case with all Chinese junks, a splendid view was sometimes obtainable, for the rains had been exceptionally heavy all over Manchuria during the autumn, and the water was consequently very high everywhere.

Twice during the day we stopped, once at a gold-washers' village, and once at a ford. The gold-washers' village was almost deserted, for the winter was coming on rapidly, and nearly all the Hei-lung-chiang population is nomadic when it can afford to be so.

Gold-washing is a great industry all along the Nonni, for the Nonni is golden beyond the dreams of avarice. Sometimes a solitary Chinaman, living in a wretched hovel, will pan out in a short six months season five hundred, a thousand, or even two thousands taels' worth of rich, red gold, and when the winter comes on he hides away his dust in fear and trembling about his person, and tries to sneak home by devious ways. More often than not he is caught and held up by the brigand hunghutzu, who only rob men of two things, gold or skins, and he loses his all. Or, if he is more cautious and willing to put his trust in desperate men, he takes out what we may call an insurance coupon with the nearest hunghutzu thief, and agrees to pay over at least one-half of his earnings in return for a safe conduct pass, or open letter, to all other hunghutzu of the

district, which will carry him thus unrobbed to his home.

Gold-washing is, therefore, a highly dangerous occupation, for apart from the brigands, the poor placer-miner may have to reckon with his own Government. Mining is illegal in Chinese territory except under official supervision, and when an unsanctioned gold-washer is caught by his officials he loses his head. Although the profits are great and wonderful, only very bold men will risk so much, for the Chinaman is above all things a man who must be satisfied that what is doing is sane and good business before he will embark in it.

Soon after noon we passed the mouth of the muddy Cholo River, which looks a mere creek, even when compared with the now narrow Nonni. On the left bank there were always the same monotonous cliffs and hills of sand, with not a living thing in sight. At five we reached a narrow place with a creek running into it, and the captain pulled up for half an hour, on the left bank.

We got out and scrambled up the highest hill. Nothing much to be seen at first. Yes, but far away in the distance I saw a narrow brown ribbon through my glasses. I gave my glasses to the stevedore, and he looked too. It was the great post-road that had swerved nearer the river, but was still many miles away. Beyond that there was nothing to be seen but rolling brown distance. What a country is Manchuria, for there is ample room for a hundred million of men! A shrill

whistle from the launch bade us return, and we raced furiously down the banks. Again we were off, puffing and panting down the interminable river. It became dark long before six, but as the moon was shining brightly it was easy to find one's way along this peaceful river. At eleven we tied up for the night, having accomplished not much under four hundred li in nineteen hours. The next day came, and found us early afoot. Even the Manchu lady passengers were thawing, and who knows what might not have happened had the journey been a little longer. They sat with me and drank cocoa by the hour, and said it was better than tea. So take note, cocoa-makers of England; there is a vast market in the Far East if you can only reach it, for cocoa is cheaper and more filling than tea.

During the morning we passed villages and junks. Every hour was bringing us nearer Chinese civilisation and inhabited places. Before noon we reached a large village on the right bank, I think it was Pu-chia-h'un, and we were now only a few miles off the Sungari. After a short halt, on we went again, and at one o'clock we passed from the Nonni into the broad Sungari, and headed pantingly upstream against a moderate current. Petuna was now only twenty milesa way, and it was a race whether we could fetch it before dark. At a quarter-past five, a cloud of masts hove up in front of us as we came round a bend, and on the banks were mud-huts galore.

Joyously, I watched the launch tug us proudly up into the middle of the shipping, and beat her way amid shouts and yells to the banks. And then, as I turned to get my things, the captain of the junk had his innings. "This is not Petuna," he said pleasantly; "Petuna is twenty li inland."

CHAPTER XVII

SLAV AND CHINAMAN

It is very hard to pronounce a reliable opinion on the results of the three years' intimacy in Manchuria between the Slav and the Chinaman. Of course, non-Britishers will scoff at the idea that an Englishman can give an impartial and unbiassed opinion, and will be inclined to argue that facts which are unfavourable to his conclusions are, if not suppressed, at least grotesquely distorted, and prominence given only to those which tend to throw doubt on the Russian assimilating power—or the Russian capacity for winning Asiatics. However, as mere assurances will never convince anybody, it is best that he who reads should decide whether the array of facts and the conclusions arrived at are based on solid and reasonable premises, and whether a spirit of fairness is shown.

At the outset, it is best to take the material evidences, and afterwards wander into fields of speculation. It must be confessed that there can be little doubt that the Chinaman learns the Russian idiom with extraordinary ease, and takes to it like

a duck to water. In Port Arthur, in Dalny, even more in Harbin, and also along the railway, there are thousands, tens of thousands, and even hundreds of thousands of Chinese who speak Russian. Some, in fact, it may be said without prejudice the vast majority, only talk a curious kitchen-Russian, in which numbers of newly-coined Russo-Chinese words and idioms have already entered; but there are thousands who can talk in a manner surprising to the Muscovite himself, and who also write after a fashion. When it is remembered that, at the most, three or four years have elapsed since the new language became at all generally heard on Manchurian soil, surprise is permissible. For, in Hong Kong, where the Englishman has been for more than sixty years, how many of the four hundred thousand Chinese there congregated have even a working knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon's tongue? Very few, indeed.

This fact must therefore be conceded to the Russian: that, whatever his faults may be, he is able to impress the superficial observer with the idea that he so thoroughly dominates and sets his mark on alien peoples, that he forces them to speak his own language, and thus forces them to come to him even when they are on their own ground. Language, after all, is a most potent weapon, and it is therefore well to inquire at once how the Russian succeeds so well in this respect, and whether the opinion that a first step towards

assimilation has been taken is correct in the case of the Chinese.

Indirectly, the explanation can be compressed into a single sentence: it is due to the low intellectual standard of the average Russian who follows in the train of conquering armies, to the lower standard in the ranks of the conquering armies themselves, to the Russian's simplicity of character, and, lastly, to his real love of talking. The average Englishman—I do not necessarily mean the educated man—is always inclined to be curt with Easterners. Whether he confesses it or not, he believes that he is dealing with inferior races, and instinctively, as he opens his mouth, he shuts down on his feelings with a steely reserve. But, at least, the Englishman has none of the American's foolish sentiment for the "little brown brother," which has been nauseating the dwellers in China treaty ports since the Stars and Stripes were hoisted over Manila.

With the Russian no such thing is apparent. Like the Irishman, a born talker, his desire for talk increases in arithmetical progression the farther he gets away from home. In Manchuria and in the Kuantung, where the authorities are not perturbed with fears of nationalist risings or the outbreaks of discontented men, this desire to "bukh," as they say in India, can be indulged in in a manner delightful to the down-trodden lower-class subjects of the great white Czar. The Russians are, indeed, in no way repressed or nervous in what

they are pleased to style their new province; they are as free as the birds or the air, absolutely unconventional and talk as they like; for is not the variegated civilian of the east for once the ally and the friend of the uniformed authorities and the booted soldier, helping in the great game of bluff?

The next point to inquire into is, how this newly-learnt knowledge has acted on the Chinaman. Has it impressed him deeply in any way? does he feel Muscovite influence more acutely owing to the language bond which is every day becoming more marked—in a word, does it prepare the ground for assimilation? The answer is emphatically "No," for the following reasons. The Chinese who have learnt to speak this curious new Russo-Chinese have only done so in order to increase their market value, and are mainly men of the very lowest classes without any of what I may call caste feeling at all. For although sufficient attention has not been directed to it, there can be no doubt whatsoever that the Chinese, like all Asiatics, have a great deal of so-called caste feeling, or caste worship. Nobody can tell the man who is a gentleman in his own country so quickly and so instinctively as the better-class and well-to-do Chinese; and nobody is secretly such a worshipper of the ordered ranks of society. Hence, although, for purposes of gain and for reasons of expediency, Chinese thrown into daily contact with the Russian have been quite willing to use the Muscovite

idiom, the matter ends there, and there is no sequel.

And the lower Chinese, even if they do not know enough to judge for themselves, are soon instructed by the better classes. In no country in the whole world are the opinions of those who, by birth, acquired influence, or natural ability, occupy leading positions in the village, the town, or the countryside so sought after and followed as in China. An eternal causerie, percolating from top to bottom, leavens the whole mass, and the opinions of master money-bags, master official, or master head-man, become ultimately the opinions of the plebs.

Thus in Manchuria your Shantung coolie, your Chihli workman, and your local native, who, after months or years of work at railway station or railway town, thought his Russian masters the arbiters of his fate, has been rudely shaken up on returning home. He has had his ideas "corrected," so to speak, and has been told that, although the earning of Russian roubles is a praiseworthy act, seeing that it enriches all, care should be taken not to let matters go any farther. For the Chinaman is, after all, but the obedient child of a vast family of four hundred millions of living men and countless myriads of dead ones; in life he is the direct servitor of his own family, and the indirect one of unnumbered other families, and is so tied by bonds that he can never escape without becoming a despised blackleg, disgraced by all. It is only when death comes that he is recompensed. Then he is exalted to

the proud position of an ancestor, and picturesquely surveys through the march of ages the germination and birth of countless other beings of whom he is the part-begetter, and who extend to him the veneration and care which others exacted from him when he was on this terrestrial globe. It should be realised that, until the heads of this great family—the local gentry, merchants, officials, and others of prominence—are gained over, what the coolie, the workman, and the agricultural classes do and think is absolutely without significance in the Far East.

It will be seen, therefore, that what might be taken at first sight for a partial Russian victory—this learning of Russian by countless Chinese thrown into daily contact with the railway Empire—is, on analysis, no victory at all except perhaps for the coffers of the Chinaman. The enmity of the officials, the hurt feelings and rage of the well-to-do who lost so much in 1900, are far greater factors in the whole Manchurian question than people realise at the present moment.

The next point to be considered is whether the Russian has broken into that close preserve, the Chinese family life, in Manchuria, and influenced it at all. Again, the answer is even more emphatically, No. The attitude of the Chinaman here, even amongst the very lowest classes, is one of open defiance, something akin to the clucking hen that gathers her brood around her on feeling that a vague danger is near. The Russian is privately looked

upon as a man who is sometimes good-natured, sometimes brutal, but always a person to whom very little is sacred. And here it is necessary to say that woman in the Far East plays as great a part behind the walls as her sisters in Europe outside them. It is one of the missionary poses to talk of the poor down-trodden women of China, waiting to be rescued from the bondage that enslaves them. Nothing is more foolish, nothing more at variance with solid facts, for the Chinese and Manchu woman, like every other woman in the world, is thrice armed with a tongue—the terror of the yellow man—and does very much as she pleases. Just as an Empress Dowager, who has no business to do so, rules China, so are all the million of Chinese homes ruled by the womankind, who, large-footed or small-footed, are the men of their family. A little story illustrates this better than reams of arguments. When the Manchus conquered China they ordered the men to shave their heads and plait up queues under pain of death. Those heads were duly shaved and the queues promptly made. But when the women's turn came and they were told to unbind their feet under pain of similar penalties, what happened? Nothing at all; not a foot was unbound, and not a head came off, for the Chinese woman knew her strength. Put your money on the woman in China, just as you do in other countries, for she always wins.

So the Chinese and Manchu women of Manchuria, being the rulers in private life and hating the Russians with a deadly hatred, for their virtue has

been frequently assailed, daily put poison into the hearts of the milder male. Even when he returns home and exhibits comparative wealth in the shape of Russian rouble notes galore, she is not appeased. For has she not at her tongue's end the disgraceful case of Madame Yung and Miss Li, both relatives of hers, both victims of Cossack lust? For in China the "lost face" of one person creates endless other lost faces for which there is no healing. Local life in Manchuria is very much like local life in countries not in the immutable East, and the same standards under different names and different garb are to be found.

So the Russification of the Chinaman in his own Manchurian home is rather more of a myth than most of the fanciful tales that have been so assiduously spread for political purposes. The Chinaman is as untouched and as unregenerate, according to the Western standards, as he ever was before; and such influences as are at work are the influences of Anglo-Saxon ideas coming from the south across the seas, and not down by land from the cold north, where is the Russian's home. Everywhere in Manchuria, even in such far-off places as Tsitsihar, Petuna and Ninguta, Shanghai and Tientsin, vernacular newspapers are to be found—newspapers reproducing the ideas and utterances of the English Press of the Far East. Everywhere below the surface there are signs that the Russian has lost instead of gaining ground since 1900, and that he has wasted on material things much that should

have been stored up for moral suasion and "education" in the future.

And, now I come to think of it, there is not much more to say. I started with the idea of marshalling a terrible array of facts, of convincing all by admirable logic, but there are, after all, very few facts worth recording. The Chinaman has not cut off his pig-tail; has not changed his dress or his habits; has not been influenced either externally or internally, mentally or morally. In fact, he has not been changed at all by the Russian. It is true he smokes Russian cigarettes. But then he only does so when he can get them cheaper than his own tobacco. He even despises that great Central Asian Russifying influence, vodka, and says that it is not half as good as his own shao-chiu. What is there left to say? Do you think that the Chinaman feels himself in the presence of a higher civilisation when he lives in Russian towns amidst Russian men and women? Not in the slightest, for more dirt and more dirty habits are to be found there than in his own native towns.

The Chinese officials have as little to do with the Slav as possible—the gentry despise him—the traders bleed him—the common people learn his language along the railway, only to insult him in their own—only the very lowest Chinese will take domestic service with the Russian. This is the position of the Colossus in Manchuria. Once more I must recur to what I have so often expressed; Russia is simply dominating the country with an

expensive army, and trembles to retreat from the false position she has created. There is no sympathy between the Chinaman and the Slav. Ideally placed, the Slav has signally failed, simply because the task he has attempted is far beyond him. The Russian may be a Tartar-Mongol after you have scratched him, he may be as Asiatic as you like ; but it is well to remember that the Tartar-Mongol, from whom the Russian partly descends, and the Chinaman of to-day are separated by mighty gulfs which militarism can never bridge.

CHAPTER XVIII

PETUNA—A SO-CALLED BRIGAND CITY

PETUNA is a city of some importance from the Chinese official point of view, and still more so from the hunghutzu, or brigand's private point of view. As I have already said, it lies some little distance inland from the river Sungari, and is the half-way house, so to speak, on the great post and caravan road between Tsitsihar and Kirin city. It has, therefore, likewise considerable commercial importance. A Manchu Military Deputy-Lieutenant-Governor should reside here with a force of so-called foreign-drilled-banner troops; but his troops are now no more. There is, likewise, an independent sub-prefect in Petuna, a civilian official —which is a rare thing to find in Hei-lung-chiang or Kirin, for these provinces are still nominally governed on a purely military basis. Chinese officialdom has, however, been forced of late years to give a more or less civil *régime* to all those towns in the centre and north of Manchuria which have risen to places of commercial importance; for militarism is essentially a Manchu product, and is

not looked upon with favourable eyes by the Chinese, who are, first and last, a nation of traders.

The stevedore of my junk gleefully accepted a place on my cart the morning after our arrival, and saved himself the spending of a few tiao; under the benign influence of a Manila cigar, he further volunteered to have me put up at the guest-house of his honourable steamship company, in Petuna itself. I was not slow in accepting the proffered hospitality, for alone amongst strangers the most valiant heart gets a little weary—and I was very tired of cocoa and eggs.

No sooner had we arrived at Petuna, after a dusty journey of a few miles along country roads, than I saw that I was to be indeed the honoured guest within the gates. Everything possible was done for me by the stevedore's people; I was given a huge room, which was unfortunately much colder than a small room; I was asked if I would like a hot bath; I was told that the cook of the establishment had some skill in the foreign culinary art; that he could make beef steaks, soups, and what not; that bread was obtainable from a Japanese shop; that I could be shaved by a man with a foreign razor; and so on, until I was bewildered beyond speech. So this was the brigand town, and these were reputed brigand people, or at least people in league with brigands! As I gazed regretfully at my long dirty-white sheepskin coat and my still more fantastic fur cap (Tsitsihar purchases, these), I realised

that the positions had been reversed, and that I was now the sorry rogue and they the most excellent masters. Within an hour, however, I had removed the marks of travel and donned a decent coat. I was asked whether I would care to go out for a ride on a mule with one of the clerks of the establishment, and see the little there was to be seen in the town. Of course I accepted, and we toured the town in style, mounted on splendid black mules fifteen hands high. The mule of Manchuria and North China is more suited in appearance for saddle than for shaft work. He is not loose-jointed and sprawl-legged like the great American mule, which in addition has an abominably ugly head. The northern mule is delicately made, and is more aristocratic-looking than probably any other mule in the world, and a well-bred animal will very often cost five hundred or a thousand taels.

Petuna, or Peihsincheng, as it is locally called, has a population which, according to my informant, fluctuates between twenty and thirty thousand people, and is exactly like every other small Chinese town. In the winter it fills up with Mongols, for Mongolia is practically across the street; with summer labourers from the great farms, carters, gold-washers, and nondescripts of all sorts; in summer the town empties, and the dead season sets in. Thus Petuna has its fashionable months like every other place in the world. I have already said how cold it had turned before I left Tsitsihar, and although Petuna lies 150 miles farther south,

the roads even here were getting hard and ready for the great winter traffic.

As we passed various huge caravanserais in the town I saw numberless teams of mules and ponies being hitched to the great country carts, preparatory to leaving for the north-east. The clerk said that harvesting had been finished a couple of weeks ago in the districts round Petuna, and that as there had been enormous crops in South-eastern Hei-lung-chiang and Northern Kirin, preparations had been completed to begin caravan work much earlier this year; that cart-prices were jumping every day and every farm-animal had been called in already to help in the work. Thus Manchurian draft-animals do not get much rest. All spring and summer they are at work in the fields, and no sooner is the harvesting through than they are rushed away in every direction to bring produce down to the great southern marts, whence it is shipped away all over the Far East.

Never had local conditions been brighter, continued the clerk, and foodstuffs were so cheap that the poorest man could eat his bellyful daily. Here the ponies and mules are not pinched in their rations as in other parts of the East. Three times a day they are stuffed as full of rich kaoliang grain and chopped straw as they can stand. I have watched animals being fed again and again, and in hardly any case did I find that they could eat their fodder baskets clean. It is only by thus allowing them to eat to utter repletion

that caravan-masters can call on their animals to do the enormous cartage work they are able to perform from day to day without evil results. In no other part of the world are such great distances covered daily as those done with ease by Manchurian carts, very often carrying from five thousand to eight thousand pounds of dead-weight; and in no other country in the world has the cartage system been so perfected as here. At a rough guess I should say that there were fully one million draft animals employed in the winter caravans' work. What this means from a military point of view every soldier will readily recognise. Instead of being tied to the railway, enormous bodies of troops could find, if necessary, unexcelled transport facilities awaiting them in every town and village of Manchuria, and would thus be able to move with ease in any direction with supplies sufficient for weeks being hauled after them as fast as the quickest infantry could march.

Touring the town I discovered that there were several dozen Japanese men and women living in Petuna. Some had small shops; others had no visible means of existence. The company's clerk told me that most of their business was with the small Russian steamboats that passed up the river to Kirin city, and that nearly all were undesirable characters who had found Korea and China proper too hot for them. Japan, however, finds these people extremely useful as intelligence officers,

although all decent Japanese express the greatest contempt for them. Low associations have robbed them, men and women alike, of that wonderful Japanese politeness and charm of manner which is so noticeable in their own country. Nearly all of them speak Russian and Northern Chinese with some fluency and are making money.

So far not a sign or a word about hunghutzu or brigands had I seen or heard, and so with some embarrassment, for I had heard of the intimate relations which are supposed to exist between traders and these gentry, I asked my companion the truth about the matter. At the first mention of the word "hutzu" he shied visibly, and did not look on me with favourable eyes. But as I continued to press him, and assured him that it was a matter of utter indifference to me whether the whole town was a brigand headquarters or not, and that I merely sought for information to amuse myself, he relented and turned to me with the inexplicable and mysterious Chinese laugh. "In the first place," he said, "the term hutzu is not used here; or if it is, it is only by people who have no knowledge. We are all honest people, and have clean hearts. The real hunghutzu are found in Central and Northern Kirin, and are utter scoundrels who live in mountains and deserve to lose their heads." Thus far so good, but when I asked for further details he was more obscure. Finally he confessed that in Petuna arrangements had been come to whereby traders and the former men of the road worked together

for mutual protection and gain. Ever since the Russian invasion by rail and river the Chinese civil and military authority had ceased to be able to do much more than collect reduced revenues, and could no longer afford much protection for traders. One course was therefore only open to traders—they must compound with brigand chiefs or be unable to trade. They had chosen the former course, and now the erstwhile brigands lived in the town, collected a fixed and moderate insurance rate on all goods *in transitu*, and furnished escorts, armed with hidden weapons and looking exactly like all other northern Chinamen, to all strings of carts and boats carrying valuables, and protected them from any free lances who still kept the road. This was therefore the whole local brigand question in a nutshell, and a very innocent and excellent nutshell, in all truth. I was therefore doomed to disappointment, and was not fated to meet burly horsed men, disguised with henna-red beards, as I had pictured to myself, who would hold me up and shoot the icicles off my moustaches by way of intimidation!

So we rode home, having done Petuna most thoroughly. It looks innocent enough for anybody, and exactly like every other northern town in Manchuria. But from Port Arthur to Harbin, and then east and west along the railway, all Russians warn you about Petuna, and tell you that only strong bodies of troops can go there.

An excellent meal had been prepared and was

On the adjoining Mongolian Frontier.

A Northern Crowd within the Grounds of a Temple.

awaiting us, all smoking hot, when we got back, and we fell to with gusto. I ate salmon from the Hei-lung-chiang, venison broth, vermicelli, chicken, and a dozen other things, and finally finished by drinking flat beer out of a liqueur glass. I asked about the Russians and whether they had seen many of these gentry in their town during the past three years. Not many, was the answer I got. It appeared that a sotnia of Cossacks had occasionally paid the place a visit, but had never remained there for long. It was extraordinary to see the indifference and veiled contempt with which they spoke of the Russian military here, and the Buriat cavalryman was apparently the great local joke. The Buriat is of course a rather debased and indifferent form of Mongol, and as Petuna lies on the Mongolian frontier, Petuna's merchants apparently know the exact market value of a Mongol, which is evidently not a very high one from their accounts. The Buriat is a small man and a badly-made, stupid, and ugly man at that, and his only virtue is that he can ride; which is not extraordinary, seeing that the Mongol Sagas say that good horsemen are born whilst their mothers sit astride. Of course Petuna sees the Russian flag a good deal on the river Sungari, for baby-steamers pass up and down the river between Harbin and Kirin city almost every day. These steamers, however, are now mostly chartered by Chinese merchants and the Russian crews of half-bred Amur natives are being gradually but surely replaced by Shantung Chinese. Are you beginning to appreciate

the Russian position in Manchuria? Manchuria, instead of being conquered by Russia, is becoming the happy-hunting ground and the home of the frugal Shantung coolie, who is being brought there in increasing quantities by the railway. Three years ago there may have been some talk, or some reason for talk, concerning Russian immigration into Manchuria; to-day there is none. The Russian immigrant, if he ever existed, has disappeared after contact with the Chinaman. A few dozen or a few hundred linger, it is true, in Harbin, Port Arthur and Dalny, eking out a miserable existence; but beyond that the civilian Russian is mainly a myth, and a bare-faced myth, made possible only by the credulity of the Press where Russia is concerned.

Taking the north-west province of Hei-lung-chiang, which has an area of nearly two hundred thousand miles, and is therefore somewhat bigger than the other two provinces of Manchuria put together, I do not believe that there are at present one hundred civilian Russians, or say one to every two thousand square miles of territory. And coming next to the military, the province has been stripped of every man along the railway (for Russia has hardly ever ventured off the railway) that can possibly be spared. The paucity of the number of railway guards at the stations in Hei-lung-chiang province is more laughable than anything else—a few wretched men to garrison places that could eat them up in half-an-hour if the tug-of-war with Japan really

comes, and Japan calls for help from Manchuria's millions.

In long arguments, and with much drinking of tea, I passed the afternoon with my hosts and dealers of all sorts and descriptions crowding in to talk over the news. One fat man with a generally meek and mild demeanour was pointed out to me as an ex-brigand. He looked more harmless than any of them, and surely had never hurt anybody.

Presently the question arose as to what I proposed doing. I told them that although one hundred years would seem like but one day in their company, and that my conversion to pig-tailed life was now merely a question of time, it seemed to me that I had better be leaving Petuna. There was nothing more for me to find out there, and the little I had learnt was not of startling importance. Petuna is the same to-day as Petuna was five years ago, and as Petuna will be five years hence, so what could I learn? As luck would have it, the launch was going down stream the next morning to Harbin. I decided to take her, and pass the day in her archaic engine-room watching the curious fight between rust, dust, oil, steam, and steel, and the Chinaman as the operator. At six in the evening I went out and bought a present for the senior lady of the establishment—a looking-glass that made you look as if you had the mumps and a partially corrugated face. It was accepted with delight, however. Even in Manchuria, make friends with the ladies, and they will see you through. At

eight o'clock I turned in; at four o'clock in the morning I was up again, and by seven I was once more speeding down the Sungari, this time *sans* junk and *sans* worry of any sort. The worst part of my travels was over.

CHAPTER XIX

CHINESE ADMINISTRATION AND RUSSIAN INTERFERENCE

The administration of Manchuria was originally conducted on a purely military basis. When Nurhachu, the founder of the Manchu dynasty, began the overthrow of the effete Mings by leading armies of Manchus, in whose ranks were many Chinese and Mongols, against those of the Chinese Emperor, he placed the government of conquered districts in the hands of trusted lieutenants. Starting from a point to the north east of Moukden of to-day, this resolute leader of men began by first subjugating all the many tribes of his countrymen around his own little kingdom. When they were conquered, he turned his attention to the Chinese-settled districts in Southern and South-western Manchuria. These acknowledged the overlordship of the Mings and were governed from Peking as the Liao-chou-wei or the districts surrounding the Liao. The Liaotung Peninsula of to-day and the country west of the Liao—known as Liao Hsi—are the areas referred to. Only years of hard fighting conquered all the territory comprised in the provinces of

Fengtien and Kirin, for the yellow soldiers of nearly three centuries ago were no cowards, and many of the Manchu tribes were jealous of the growing power. Nurhachu died, leaving his work uncompleted, and Peking still in the hands of the Mings, and it was a grandson of his, the great Shun Chih, who first ascended the Dragon Throne of China.

From 1644, the first year of the reign of Shun Chih, the government of the southernmost and the most settled province of Manchuria, Fengtien, has become more and more similar to that of the other eighteen provinces of China, until to-day it may be said that, with one important exception, it is practically the same. What this difference is will be shown later. The northernmost, or the Hei-lung-chiang province, was not brought even nominally under the sway of the Manchu government until 1671, or say nearly half a century after Kirin and Fengtien had acknowledged the new *régime*. And up to the time of the Boxer troubles the Hei-lung-chiang military administration had continued unbroken for two centuries and a quarter. The province of Kirin is like Hei-lung-chiang, governed by a Chiang Chün or Military Governor, but although the administration should be more or less military, the ever-advancing tide of Chinese settlers coming from the south, tillers of the soil and peaceful traders, has ended by making the so-called military *régime* impossible in all but the extreme northern and eastern parts of the country. These are still largely covered with virgin forests in which wild beasts roam at will, and

only venturesome hunters and searchers after the priceless ginseng root are found in these desolate stretches, so that their mode of government has no importance.

Of Manchuria's recently estimated population of twenty millions, the great bulk is in Fengtien. It would be foolish to attempt to give a really accurate estimate of population province by province, for even the gross total of twenty millions is probably either too large or too small. But for the sake of illustration and for driving home the exact condition of each province, there is no harm in saying that Fengtien has probably thirteen million people, Kirin five millions, and Hei-lung-chiang but two. This will give the reader a good idea of the country from the Chinese trade point of view—which is the one of the greatest fundamental importance. It is necessary, likewise, to remember that Hei-lung-chiang is nearly twice as large as Kirin, and that Kirin itself is double the size of Fengtien. Fengtien therefore may be said to be civilised, Kirin half-civilised, and Hei-lung-chiang very little so.

I have already said that with one important exception the province of Fengtien is to-day governed much as the other provinces of China. The highest official is the Governor-General, who corresponds in rank to the great Viceroys of China proper. As Governor-General, he is the Commander-in-Chief of all the Banner and Chinese troops within the province of Fengtien, and by virtue of his high office is also High Commissioner in charge of all the defences of

Manchuria. In this capacity, when the defences of the other two provinces, Kirin and Hei-lung-chiang, are concerned, he has as colleagues the two Military Governors residing at Kirin and Tsitsihar, and is, therefore, to some extent their superior. Not entirely, however, for the Chinese administrative system is so cunningly devised that the authority of every official, no matter how high in office he may be, is always hedged around with reservations calculated to check him from becoming too presumptuous and thereby dangerous to the Throne. It would be impossible without wandering considerably away from the point to deal satisfactorily with the subject of overlapping authority, but it will suffice to say that the Chinese Government, ever nervous lest some powerful satrap should accumulate too much authority and power, seeks by this curious multiplication of office and overlapping of authority, to render the overlords of far-away provinces never certain of their own prerogatives, and thus forces them to consult inferiors in matters of special nature. Railways, telegraphs, and the steam-road will, in time, greatly modify this, but to-day the old fear is still present.

The highest civil and military official—a dual office, it will be observed—of Fengtien is therefore the Governor-General. Under him, at his provincial capital of Moukden, there are five Boards of Ministries which are to all intents and purposes the counterparts of the great Boards of Pekin—the one exception being the Board of Civil Office, which

A Manchu Country Squire, his Family and Retainers.

does not exist in the Fengtien Government, and thus the Moukden Viceroy may not appoint his own officials. Each Board is presided over by a Vice-President (note how cunning this is, as the Pekin Boards are of course controlled by Presidents higher than the Moukden seigneurs), and each of these Vice-Presidents is in his own special department a colleague of the head of the province, the Governor-General, and therefore something of a restraining influence. The five Boards are the Board of Revenue, the Board of Ceremonies, the Board of War, the Board of Punishments, and finally the Board of Works.

It will be therefore seen that the chief Manchurian province enjoys a special distinction from the other provinces of China—and that this special provincial Government, a reproduction of the Peking system, shows the peculiar character of Manchuria in the eyes of the Manchu rulers and their desire to keep it somewhat distinct from China proper. All these somewhat tedious details are necessary in order to understand fully the nature of the self-appointed task of the Russian and the extraordinary difficulties which any one, no matter how astute, would experience in attempting to substitute an alien *régime* in the place of the extremely complex Chinese one which has obtained for so many years.

Under the Governor-General there is a Civil Governor, who enjoys the same rank as that of a provincial Governor of China, and this official is likewise a colleague of his nominally supreme chief.

Each Board, apart from its Vice-President, has a large staff of secretaries and minor officials, each of whom has a special department under his exclusive care, and in addition to these there are in Moukden the head Government offices of such special services as the military gendarmerie, the police, the Imperial hunting grounds, the pasturage and stud departments of the Throne, and finally various tax offices. Comparatively recently, a Bureau of Foreign Affairs has been added to this imposing list, and the wretched officials in charge of this last-named office have been almost led to suicide during the past two years owing to the Russian worries. But all the officials so far enumerated merely correspond to the great Government Officers of any European country, and reside altogether at Moukden.

The actual work of governing the people is entrusted to prefects and magistrates, who constitute the general administrative body of the service, and are charged with the collection of revenue, the maintenance of order, the primary dispensation of justice, the conduct of literary examinations, the control of the Government postal service, and in general with the exercise of public administration. The highest of these officials is the Taotai, or the Intendant of Circuit, who corresponds almost exactly to the Commissioner of the Indian system. The Taotai is an official exercising administrative duties over two or three prefectures, the biggest provincial sub-division, and he has also control over

the military forces within his jurisdiction. The actual provincial divisions are first the prefecture, or fu; second the sub-prefecture, or t'ing; third the department, or chou; and lastly the district, or hsien.

It is impossible to deal here with the complex subject of how these various divisions and sub-divisions down to the hsien or district are arranged, or to detail the guiding principles followed. It will suffice if it has been understood how excellent on paper, and how highly developed, is the system on which the Manchurian Government is conducted. An index to the efficiency which should result is given when it is pointed out that each official is directly responsible to someone else, that every step and possible contingency is also provided for on paper, that no one man is so highly placed that he is not directly responsible to someone else, and finally that these bonds of custom, etiquette, and precedent have become such a part and parcel of the body politic and of the lives of the common people, that even the greatest upheavals, flinging men here and there, and involving things in an apparently inextricable muddle, find all, when quiet finally comes, looking for the *status quo ante*, and achieving it as fast as possible.

But although the administration of Fengtien is so well ordered and complete, it must not be supposed that there is no element of self-government in the province; for there is, and Chinese officials rely much more than is commonly supposed on the cooperation of so-called headmen

of villages, towns, and cities. These headmen or Hsiang-yao are selected by their fellow villagers or townsmen, as the case may be, and are approved of by the civil authority of the district. In a village or countryside there is only one; in a town each ward has its representative. The duties of these men may be expressed in very few words. They are simply the recognised intermediaries between the local inhabitants and the civil power. They represent their constituents in disputes, they appear in cases of litigation in the local courts, they stamp title-deeds, report suspicious death cases, armed robberies, &c. It will be seen that the Chinese system is wonderfully balanced, and that the peaceful and well-conducted, unless they become involved in lawsuits, the curse of China, have almost all men can desire.

But there is another point to observe. The great gentry and merchant guilds, unions vastly more satisfactory than the European variety, play a large part in all financial and revenue-collecting matters. The oil to grease the wheels of officialdom is largely obtained from these guilds, and although originally formed for the protection of their members against the rapacity of squeeze-worshippers, they are to-day looked upon with favour by the local authorities, for they can always be relied upon for prompt cash payments, settling contributions in gross, to the mutual profit of all concerned without undue delay.

It is amusing to glance for a moment at what Mr. Wirt Gerrare, the latest authority on Russian

expansion in the Far East, says about Fengtien province. Talking of Mr. Hirschmann, the builder of the Central Manchurian railway—that is, the section from Port Arthur to Harbin—he casually says, "he is an able negotiator, understands the Chinese character better than his fellows, and has set about the difficult task of russifying the Fengtien province of Manchuria!" In a single sentence, the vast and populous province of Fengtien is thus dismissed, and those who have not the time to investigate for themselves are led to believe that thirteen millions of hard-headed people, with a governmental system which has become part of their very being, are being russified by a railway engineer, when he has a few hours free from railway construction!

The province of Kirin is entirely differently constituted to that of Fengtien. As I have already said, its administration is practically on a military basis. Provision has had to be made, however, for the government of the Chinese on a purely civil basis wherever they have settled in large numbers in the province, and, therefore, to-day there are nearly a dozen prefectures and sub-prefectures, presided over by civil officials, which cover large areas and contain big settled populations. Taking Harbin as the centre of a circle, it may be said that all these civil-administered and well-settled districts lie within a two-hundred-mile radius. All the Kirin civil officials are of course subject to the authority of the military Governor of Kirin, but, as a matter of fact, the Governor-General of Fengtien and his *entourage*

at Moukden are mainly instrumental in appointing and removing Kirin civil officials, although the Board of Civil Office at Peking is the Ministry which nominally deals with them.

The province of Hei-lung-chiang may be dismissed with very few words. It is under a purely military *régime*, and there are only two civil territorial officials in nearly two hundred thousand square miles of country. These are stationed at the independent sub-prefectures of Hulan and Pei-tuan-lintzu—both not more than a few miles to the north-east of Harbin, and lying in the valleys of the river Hulan, a tributary of the Sungari. These sub-prefectures form the limit of the thickly-settled districts of North-Western Manchuria. The only other part of Hei-lung-chiang in which Chinese are to be found to any great extent is the valley of the upper Nonni, between Tsitsihar and Mergen. Populous villages of recent growth were to be found here before the Boxer *régime*, but the disastrous year of 1900, and the Russian brutalities which followed, have greatly reduced the number of inhabitants.

The reader will now have some idea of the civil administration of the three Manchurian provinces. It is now time to speak of the military.

The forces to which the throne even to-day nominally looks for unquestioned support in Manchuria are the Banner troops. Only in theory, however, and to that theory every day is adding a little more of the absurd and improbable. These

Banner troops are formed from the descendants of the Manchus, Northern Chinese, and Mongols, who assisted in the conquest of China, and Banner people are known under the general name of Ch'i Jên. The major part of the Manchus and their allies who conquered the eighteen provinces remained to garrison the newly-acquired territory, but such as were left behind in Manchuria were included in the complex Manchu military organisation, which obtains to this day.

The headquarters of the Banners are, of course, in Peking, but the whole system extends to Manchuria. Each Banner is divided into three Kusa, or divisions, and each division has only one nationality in its ranks—Manchu, Mongol, or Chinese, as the case may be. These subdivisions are to-day somewhat nominal, and are only quoted to show that a difference exists in theory between the various nationalities of Ch'i Jên or Bannermen. A competent authority estimates that there are not more than from one-and-half million Banner people or Manchus—call them which you like, in the whole of Manchuria, and this figure includes men, women, and children. In appearance the men cannot be distinguished from the ordinary Chinese, for they dress everywhere almost exactly alike, and it is only in a few almost purely Banner towns that a few peculiarities may be observed. These have been kept up more because it is more *chic* to be known as a Manchu than as a common Chinaman than for any other reason. With the women it is different,

for their dress is very distinctive, and in Manchuria, as in other countries, it is fashionable for the women to follow the lead of the upper ten in the North by being Manchus if they can possibly manage it. Numbers of men are constantly by bribery getting their names placed on the rolls of various Banner corps in Manchuria, and it is hinted by the gossips in the towns that the ladies have generally something to do with it. The women's head-dress is very fantastic, and their feet are shod in long high-soled shoes of very peculiar design. Manchu men and women have naturally much smaller feet than the Chinese. Although nominally all belonging to the Banners, in practice only a very small portion of the able-bodied male Manchu population put in any sort of service with the colours. The Banner population of Manchuria may, in fact, be called reservists pensioned off before they have served, and this archaic force has, of course, had absolutely no value in the field for many years. Every male receives a small monthly subsidy which is just enough to feed him, and, therefore, turns him into a loafer, for to obtain even this trifling sum he must attend his pension office monthly in person—a state of affairs highly unsatisfactory from every point of view.

To fill the active cadres of Banner battalions which before the Boxer business might sometimes be seen drilling in provincial capitals and elsewhere, certain examinations were held in exercises, interesting in this age of smokeless powder and quick-

CHINESE ADMINISTRATION AND RUSSIAN INTERFERENCE. THE SLAV POLICY OF THE BOOT AND SWORD.

firers. The first qualification is shooting with bow and arrow on foot. When a candidate has passed this stiff test, he is required to mount a fiery steed and drive full tilt down a narrow trench, making a certain number of bulls with the bow and arrow on targets, placed about three yards distant from the cutting. In order to prevent deception it is customary to mark the boot of each candidate with a number, but for a consideration the official boot-markers put the mark on the side opposite to that on which the judges sit, and, therefore, any candidate may hire a crack shot to win distinction for him, without any fear of detection. Weight lifting, with great stone weights, qualifies you for the upper grades, and a Chinese Sandow would probably get a divisional command in the Banner forces without an hour's delay.

This brief sketch of the Manchu or Banner population of Manchuria will have shown the special position of the men, the pride of caste of the women, and how the throne still does not dare to tamper with ancient privileges, which are retarding the development of the country, and which keep alive old evils.

The active Banner forces of Manchuria were supposed to number between forty and fifty thousand men before the Boxer war, and were posted mainly at the provincial capitals—Moukden, Kirin, and Tsitishar—and at certain towns in Fengtien where the Banner population predominated. Thousands of Manchu families still live in cities that are prac-

tically contemporaneous with the old-time victories of Nurhachu.

In spite of the early military prestige of the Manchus, of late years, even the Chinese Government has rather laughed at their capacity in the field, and so the effective garrisons of Manchuria became some time ago, foreign-drilled Chinese troops. When I say foreign-drilled, I use it in the sense understood in China—that is, drilled after supposedly foreign standards and armed with Mausers and Krupp guns. The number of these troops was estimated previous to the coming of the Russians at about thirty thousand men.

The military administration of Fengtien, although under the supreme control of the Governor-General of the province, is carried on directly by a specially-appointed Military Governor. Under him are four Military Deputy-Lieutenant-Generals residing at Moukden, Chin-Chou-t'ing, Hsing-Ching, and until recently, Chin Chou, in the Kuantung territory. The approximate number of men in this force was ten thousand, at least one-half being stationed at Moukden. This concludes both the military and civil government of the province of Fengtien.

In the quasi-military administered province of Kirin, the foreign-drilled Chinese troops were divided into six commands of Military Deputy-Lieutenant-Governors, each having approximately two thousand men under him. From a military point of view the province of Kirin has always been rated much more highly than Fengtien. Three of

these six commands were spread-eagled along North-Eastern Kirin, and although two of them were some distance from the frontier, they were obviously designed for protection against Russian encroachments.

The first or most northerly post, Sansing, situated on the junction of the Hurka with the Sungari, was strategically as excellent a position as could have been chosen. A dozen big guns and a trustworthy garrison posted here would have stopped any advances from the Amur up the Sungari, and once the Sungari was closed, it would be almost impossible to get into the country by this route, for the roads are practically non-existent. In 1900, although the big guns were there, Chinese military corruption was of course responsible for a complete fiasco. Sansing fell into the hands of Grodokof without a shot being fired, and that commander's men steamed peacefully up the Sungari to the "relief of Harbin" as he called it, with a flotilla of barges and stern wheelers that could have been sunk with a single pom-pom.

The second post, Ninguta, commands the great Eastern highway to the provincial capital Kirin, and was designed to prevent an advance into Manchuria from Nikolsk in the Primorsk before the railway was either thought of or built. It was also the centre of a second line of defence for Hun-ch'un, the important frontier post on the Korean-Russian frontier. This third post, Hun-ch'un, was rightly esteemed by the Chinese authorities a place of the

first importance, and was the subject of a special appointment.

Of these garrisons, nominally linked together by a vague system of outposts, although they lay immense distances apart, Hun-ch'un alone did any fighting in 1900. Obeying the insane orders of the Peking usurper, the Hun-ch'un military mandarin opened fire on the Russian forts opposite. A few days went by, the Russians were reinforced from Khabarovsk and Vladivostock, the Chinese Commander heard that no resistance was being offered elsewhere in Manchuria, and that his rear was already threatened by Grodokof; so he fired a few more shots, and then, under cover of night, raced for Ninguta. From Ninguta he went to Kirin by road, bringing fearful stories of the excesses committed by the Russians, which made all palsied with fear. The other three Kirin garrison towns had not much strategical importance—they were mainly concerned with brigand-hunting and the guarding of the great inland highways, duties that have been more and more neglected. These three posts were the provincial capital Kirin, Petuna, close to the Mongolian frontier, and A-shih-ho, a market town twenty miles to the east of Harbin. None of these garrisons fired a shot in 1900.

The six Kirin Military Deputy-Lieutenant-Governors, being all more or less occupied with civil duties had, with the exception of the Hun-ch'un Commander, for years ceased to regard the military side of their office seriously. Corrupt

to a degree, hated by the common people and the merchant classes alike, on account of their general ignorance and autocratic ways, they were not even fit food for the cannon—they should have been hanged. Time has now swept them away, and even with the armed Russian astride of the railway, the Chinese authorities are reappointing civil officials *ad interim* in the place of the former so-called military. The Kirin hunghutzu pest, which used to exist to such an extent, was solely due to the inaction of these military mandarins who, leading a lotus life in the town, refused to sally forth and patrol the highways.

Turning now to the last and purely military-governed province of Hei-lung-chiang, there were likewise six military mandarins (Deputy-Lieutenant-Governors) stationed here, who carried on the government of the country under the Manchu Military Governor at Tsitsihar. Of these six commands, four were posted in what I will call the upper Nonni valleys. Beginning with the provincial capital Tsitsihar, the other posts were Pu-T'e-ha, thirty miles to the west of the river and half-way up to the next post, Mergen ; Mergen, the highest navigable point on the Nonni ; and finally Aigun on the Amur, twenty miles as the crow flies from infamous Blagoveschensk. The two detached posts were Khailar, on the other side of the Hsing-an mountains and two hundred and fifty miles away from anything ; and Hulan, near the banks of the Sungari, and within a stone's throw of Harbin.

The Nonni line of garrisons were more or less under the immediate control of the Military Governor at Tsitsihar; the two detached posts were too far away for much supervision to be possible, and, as at Hulan, there was a civil official, a great trade in produce, peaceful conditions, and much money to be made; the military mandarin and his forces—mostly paper forces, I believe, only mobilised by enlisting coolies for periodic inspections—had degenerated rather more than usual. At Khailar, however, there were no inducements whatsoever to degenerate. The trans-Hsing-an regions are desolate and hardly inhabited at all, so the military mandarin, although he could not rely upon formidable walls from behind which he might defy his foes like his *confrère* of Tientsin, at least could take to the country and indulge in De Wet tactics. This is exactly what he did in 1900. The only mobile field force in Manchuria during that year was the Khailar command, and although Khailar fell without any fighting, the 4,000 men of the Western Hei-lung-chiang battalions on two occasions attempted attacks on overwhelming Russian forces in different parts of the country—and then fled, as men do who have no support.

The importance of the really respectable numbers of Hei-lung-chiang Banner and Chinese troops scattered along the Nonni line from Tsitsihar to the Amur lay in the protection of the gold mines and also on account of ancient tradition. The great gold mine of Manchuria is of course the Moho, on

the Amur. The Moho mines employ thousands of men and numbers of soldiers to guard them. It has been rightly or wrongly estimated that the output of alluvial gold at this one mine is about 2,000,000 taels a year. But apart from the rich deposit, the Chinese Government works, or rather superintends the working, of a number of semi-official camps of gold washers in these regions, from Moho to Aigun. The gold won is taken over by the Government at a fixed valuation, weighed, made up into parcels at Tsitsihar, and forwarded at regular intervals by caravan to Peking under heavy escorts of cavalry. At least fifty per cent. of China's gold is obtained from the province of Hei-lung-chiang, and the Amur and the Nonni are responsible for most of Manchuria's output.

The ancient tradition handed down since the times of the treaty of Nerchinsk has also a great deal to do with Hei-lung-chiang's military forces. Less than 250 years ago, the Chinese, or rather the Manchus, by their firm action, extorted this Treaty of Nerchinsk from the then unimportant State of Muscovy. Aigun stands almost exactly where it was when, using it as a base, the Manchus destroyed the old-world Russian adventurer's town of Albazin two and a half centuries ago, and Hei-lung-chiang has therefore tender memories for the Manchu rulers, as the place from which they have had their first and sole success against the ever-encroaching Slav.

It will be thus seen that the wild province of

Hei-lung-chiang was but very feebly ruled under the so-called military *régime*, and that it was only where Chinese enterprise had expressed itself in agriculture in the extreme east of the province and along the upper Nonni that there was any settled population worth speaking of. In fact it may be said that of the 190,000 square miles of country comprised within the provincial boundaries, at least seven-eighths is either barren or only inhabited by nomad Mongols, who, although nominally superintended, are practically free-rovers without any restraint whatsoever.

Chinese and Chinese Bannermen have at most a few thousand square miles of land under cultivation, and the area has decreased rather than increased during the last three years. Hei-lung-chiang, which could support with ease millions of people and raise enormous crops of wheat, to-day has less than two millions, of whom great numbers are Mongols, or that curious indigenous people, the Solons, and kindred tribes, still found in the little visited north-western triangle of mountain-lands adjacent to the Amur.

It will have now been understood that the three provinces of Manchuria have different conditions, different methods of government, and require different treatment, and that to speak of the whole vaguely as Manchuria is to misunderstand the whole question. The Russian has misunderstood, and misunderstood most lamentably, from his point of view, the immensity of the problem he has so

Russian Barracks behind Newchwang.

thoughtlessly tackled—and it is now my task to show what has been done and what not done.

The Boxer outbreak only began in Manchuria during the month of July, 1900. It took many weeks for this insane propaganda to filter across the Chihli frontiers by land and come by sea on steamer and junk from its home and starting-place—Shantung. Its rapid growth in Manchuria may be accounted for by the fact that tens of thousands of Chihli and Shantung workmen and field-hands yearly cross over the narrow Gulf of Pechili to seek either temporary or permanent occupation in the three Eastern provinces, where strong men are at a great premium and the population is insufficient to garner in the ever-increasing harvests. Manchuria in this respect greatly resembles Britain's granary, Canada. Men are more badly needed than anything else. The building of the Manchurian railways had brought over during '98, '99, and 1900 even greater numbers of Shantung coolies than usual, and when the Lao-T'uan-yeh or Boxer chiefs began to appear in the flesh, calling on the faithful to rise, their fellow-provincials needed but little inciting to beat railway-iron into crude swords, and with horrid yells frighten the Russian into precipitate flight.

The following sections of the Chinese Eastern Railway had been completed at the time of the outbreak, say the month of July. From Port Arthur north, the railhead had nearly reached K'ai-yüan; from Harbin south, over one hundred versts had been built down towards the Kuantung

territory, leaving, therefore, a blank of three hundred versts, or, roughly, two hundred miles, on the Central Manchurian section. From Nikolsk in the Primorsk, about one hundred and fifty versts were half completed, and from Harbin south-east, to meet this section, two hundred versts were more or less ready. Thus, on the eastern half of the trans-Manchuria section, there was likewise a gap of two hundred versts. West of Harbin, on the road to the trans-Baikal, the railhead was on the left bank of the Nonni—that is, had not yet crossed the river. From Kaidolove, the point on the Siberian line where the railway leading to Manchuria branches off, it has been impossible to ascertain exactly how much of the line was ready, but it is safe to say that it was hardly much more advanced than across the western Manchurian frontier. Here, therefore, was the most important gap—that is, the unbuilt section between the western Hei-lung-chiang frontier and the Nonni river—a gap of possibly four hundred versts. These railway details are necessary to understand the exact nature of what subsequently happened.

July of 1900 passed by, and the stampede of Russian railway builders and Russian guards was followed by the burning and tearing up of about twenty per cent. of the construction already completed. In Fengtien the damage was the worst—in Hei-lung-chiang the least.

As soon as the Boxers had their short-lived fling, the counter-movement set in. Russian troops

began to move forward, weeks after they should have done if their boasted military arrangements had really had any foundation on fact; and slow retribution overtook quick-handed maniacs. For a long time nobody knew exactly what had happened, or why really all this fuss and commotion were necessary. The position was terribly complicated, and certainly too much so for the Russian to see clearly. China had begun, in May, 1900, by disavowing the Boxers. Then, as official support and their growing vehemence had frightened the Peking Court, the Throne determined to sit on the fence—an undignified and dangerous position for a Throne at the best of times. Finally, the bombardment of the Taku forts decided wobbly Imperial counsels. They resolved that they must henceforth throw in their lot with the people, and support the rising or else the Throne might go too. Edicts were therefore issued to eject the trespassing foreigner from the eighteen provinces—from Manchuria, from Mongolia, in fact, from everywhere; and chaos immediately followed. Every viceroy, governor, and military commandant adhered to his own ideas and consulted his own safety alone. We are, however, now only concerned with Manchuria, and, interesting as the subject is, it is impossible to follow the Boxer business in all its curious ramifications.

We have already seen how the Aigun and Hunch'un military mandarins from their forts, and the Khailar Deputy-Lieutenant-Governor in the field,

were the only men of the twenty odd high military officials in Manchuria who obeyed the famous general expulsion edicts and the special Manchurian and Mongolian one notifying all that a state of war existed between China and Russia. It is here necessary to once more insist on the strange but clear distinction between the Boxers and the *bonâ fide* military. For the Boxers and the Manchurian soldiery, although friendly to one another, did not openly cooperate. As was the case in Tientsin and Peking, the Boxers scorned soldiery drilled after foreign methods, and the soldiers on their side looked with thinly veiled contempt on the great article of faith of the Boxers—their invulnerability. The wailing assertion of the Boxers that they "Pu P'a Ch'iang tao"—feared neither the gun nor the sword—was a shibboleth which the anti-foreign party in Peking was pleased to conjure with, but withal secretly derided as being too absurd for real belief after China's many years experience of firearms.

When Aigun and Hun-ch'un had been reduced to ashes and the Khailar flying columns had quickened their pace until they more than justified their name, the Russian columns had nothing much to do but chase small detached parties of desperadoes that the disbanding of the Chinese military and the general chaotic condition of the country had created. For the Boxers in Manchuria collapsed as soon as the Tuan *régime* was ended in Peking. The operations against these insignificant disturbers of

the peace were unduly prolonged, partly because extreme mobility is the birthright of every one living in a country where draft and saddle animals swarm, and partly because these Boxers, who in many cases developed into hunghutzu or mere bandits, were very convenient excuses for Petersburg diplomatists to have at their disposal when Europe should have sufficient time to look at Manchuria.

The great August-November "invasion of Manchuria" may be divided into two distinct movements —that from the south coming *viâ* the seaports of Port Arthur and Newchwang, and that from the north from Siberia, by which expression I include the trans-Baikal, the Amur, and the Primorsk. The Grodokof flotilla, starting from Khabarovsk and sailing up the Sungari, was the first to get in; and Grodokof with a few hundred Cossacks swept across Kirin and entered the provincial capital amidst a thunder of applause. Meanwhile, detached corps and battalions were tramping across the arid steppes of western Hei-lung-chiang, suffering bitter wants and finally reaching Tsitsihar. Down from guilty Blagoveschensk, across mountainous post-roads, hastily mobilised Siberian battalions likewise reached Mergen, threw their packs with sighs of relief into small junks, gazed with wonder on the hordes of brown-yellow men, and at last met their comrades at Tsitsihar. Nikolsk pushed men into eastern Kirin as fast as possible. Port Arthur and Newchwang slowly accounted for Moukden, Tieh-

ling, and K'ai-yüan. Detached bodies tramped into the distant magistratures of T'ung-hua and Huai-jen on the Yalu frontier. Fêng-huang-ch'êng, an important resting-place on the road to Korea, saw the northern tricolour hoisted. Halt, then, stand at ease—the occupation is completed! This is stormy 1900.

The watchword of 1901 was, Complete the railway at all costs and build, build until there is nothing else left to build; build so that the Empire along the iron track shall be unmistakable, insistent, undeniable. So an unparalleled bustle was witnessed during 1901, and millions and tens of millions were spent like water. Moreover, the Russian had been very cold during the winter months of 1900, and he was determined not to suffer again. Indeed, they say that the winter of 1900 was as unpleasant to many Russians in Manchuria as the famous retreat from Moscow was to Napoleon's men. So the railway was built at a very wonderful rate. Sections sprang into life, touched by the magic hand of the rouble, and with rabbit-like rapidity gave birth in turn to other sections; and from these sections stone and brick houses started up, challenging native life and causing all to marvel. Temporary settlements full of contractors' men dotted the Hulungchiang steppes, and these being in fear of their lives had to be protected by numerous Cossack posts—which unusual animation gave rise to the stories of Russian towns springing up everywhere. The

year 1901 was therefore eventful, very eventful, and the Russian was so full of vainglorious confidence that he thought there was nothing he could not accomplish. Had he not indeed an Oriental destiny? he exclaimed, for white life was springing up unmistakably where he had made yellow deserts; the Chinaman was subjugated, conquered, ready to be assimilated; and, intoxicated with the clamour of his own voice, the Russian argued that Manchuria was his own. It is sad to think how often he who leaps takes long to discover that where he has jumped is but a pit from which he can emerge with difficulty.

The Russian voice of 1901 was unfortunately too loud, and attracted the attention of outside nations, who had been too much interested in the main Chinese tragi-comedy to take note of the side-shows. Manchurian trade was, however, being seriously hindered, and, as it is only in trade that the rest of the world is ostentatiously interested in the Far East, the clamour grew. Finally it became too loud to be ignored, and so in April, 1902, the so-called Manchurian Evacuation Agreement was signed in Peking, and diplomatists pretended that the question was completely ended.

Russia undertook in this agreement to retire from, and hand back to the Chinese authorities, the whole of the Chinese Trans-Amur in three time-periods. Six months after signature, *i.e.*, on the 8th October, 1902, the country west of the Liao and the ex-mural railway to Newchwang were to be given up; half a

year later, on the 8th April, 1903, the rest of the province of Fengtien, including the great capital Moukden and the treaty port of Newchwang, were to be restored; and finally on the 8th October, 1903, the two northern provinces, Kirin and Hei-lung-chiang, were to be surrendered. Foolish diplomatists allowed the railway-guard clause again to slip in without any specification as to what number of troops could be included under this heading: and the result of this and other acts of carelessness is that we have the great Far Eastern question brought up a couple of years after the Manchurian settlement was nominally effected.

The three eastern provinces, as they really are, should now stand up before the eyes of the general reader; the southern, Fengtien, populous, contented, containing large towns and just like the northern provinces of China proper; the central, Kirin, settled in the great rich valleys and plains through which the railway runs to Harbin—wild in the north and east which were once controlled by so-called Chinese military; and finally the northern province, Hei-lung-chiang, practically uninhabited except for the small Chinese cultivated area adjoining Kirin province and the Tsitsihar-Mergen valleys. On top of this comes 1900, the disappearance of the Chinese and Manchu military, the great inrush of Russian troops, the rebuilding and completion of the railway, and the temporary disruption of the Chinese administration of Manchuria, a disruption nominally terminated by the evacuation agreement.

THE NEWCHWANG CUSTOMS HOUSE FROM WHICH RUSSIA HAS TAKEN MILLIONS.

These are the general facts which stand out and are fairly well known. But what went on underneath the surface? Is it true that the Russian, in spite of all his agreements and protestations to the contrary, succeeded in the comparatively short time at his disposal in assimilating the Manchurian people, destroying the Chinese system, and making all contented with Russian rule? Not in the slightest, not even outwardly.

The first thing Russian commanders did when they came into the country was to seize the telegraph stations. They said: "The telegraph wires are the sensitory nerves of even the Chinese body-politic today; let us seize hold of them, grip them with such insistence that the Chinaman, feeling our hands so constantly, will end by being enslaved." This looks well on paper, but like many theories does not work out satisfactorily in practice, especially with such an elusive thing as the yellow man.

The Imperial Chinese telegraph administration has a system of some two thousand lines in Manchuria. The most important line is the Shanhaikwan-Aigun main line, which links Peking with the great provincial capitals and trade centres, and, crossing the Amur, connects at Blagoveschensk with the Siberian system. The exact route of this line is as follows: Shanhaikwan, Newchwang, Liaoyang, Moukden, Kirin, Petuna, Tsitsihar, Mergen, Aigun, and then across the Amur. At Kirin the line bifurcates, and an important branch wire runs *viâ* Ninguta, down to Chinese Hun-ch'un,

and connects from thence, by means of the Primorsk system, with Vladivostock. Again, north of Liao-yang, there is another branch line which crosses the Korean frontier, after leaving the central valley and following the important strategic and caravan route K'uan-ch'êng-tzu, Mo-tien-ling Pass, Fêng-huang-ch'êng, Antung, and the Yalu.

By November, 1900, practically every one of the telegraph stations of these towns were in Russian hands, and have remained so to this day.

With the seizure of the telegraph offices the first step of the military was completed. The second was the appointment of a Commissair, or high military officer, at each of the three provincial capitals, Moukden, Kirin, and Tsitsihar. The Commissair was nominally a Military Commissioner charged with the representation of the supreme Russian military authorities, at the Yamen of each Manchu Governor, his actual duties and his course of action were, however, ill-defined, after the manner in which the Russian loves to act in far-off places. The Commissair was practically given a free hand, and told to make the most of his opportunites—to bluff, bully, cajole, menace, implore—in fact, to do anything he liked so long as he made headway in the great work of wresting privileges from the Manchu, and getting really worthless paper agreements, acknowledging the Russian right to interfere in various directions, which would pave the way to ultimate absorption and open dominion. Through all 1901, the Chinese territorial authorities

and the high Manchu officials at the provincial capitals lay extremely low. Many of them had been actually driven away in 1900, or had disappeared in some mysterious way, but the more courageous ones simply bided their time, were very cautious, conciliated the people as much as possible by not mentioning the word taxes, and quietly entered their Yamens through the back-doors. So long as the Peking Court was at Hsianfu, or on its slow-moving progress back to the northern capital, the Chinese officials hedged. The Russians are not bad people, they said ; it is true they kill people, but that does not matter, for in China other men are soon born. How convenient is Chinese philosophy !

In 1902, however, a change took place. The Peking Court was finally back, although nobody had really believed that such a thing would ever occur, evacuation was coming, and all began to pluck up courage. Even Tsêng-Chi, the trembling Viceroy of Fengtien, calmly told his oft-cursed taskmaster, the Commissair, who for months, it seemed almost years, had dealt out knout-like words to him, that his agreements were not worth the paper they were written on until they had received the Chinese Imperial consent ; that that consent would never be forthcoming ; and that the law of foreign countries admitted that agreements extorted by intimidation had no legal value. By these resolute utterances he provoked terrible scenes, in which the shouts and curses of angry Russian

voices startled the people in the streets, and sent them home with heart-shrinkings.

The two defiant Military Governors at Kirin and Tsitsihar, when it was once definitely decided by the Governments that evacuation must really take place, became as calmly insulting as only Manchus can be. These two men had from the beginning shown most remarkable pluck in adverse circumstances. Sapao, the Military Governor of Hei-lung-chiang, is a man of singular audacity. His colleague at Kirin is more calm, but is equally determined. The Russian had never really made any headway with either of them, and although the Kirin Commissair alleges that the Grand-Ducal timber and mining concession was extorted by him, the Governor denies it. The work, therefore, of the great Department of War, and of the renowned Alexeieff, may be therefore summed up as merely the extorting in the early days of some so-called concessions, a seizure of all the telegraph stations, but nothing else. Whenever words were not sufficient, the Commissairs marched their men into Yamen courtyards, and threatened armed force with rough voices.

Each Commissair has his own private guard of Cossacks, and is in supreme control of the provincial telegraph offices—offices at which Chinese operators and uniformed Russian telegraphists share the work together. Riding forth on his horse, sitting at his office, bullying a wretched Manchu, reading an intercepted telegraphic

message, the Commissair was but the embodiment of that thing of brute force, the Russian army; was but a master-link in a long chain of armed men stretched along the railway; futile, ill-conceived, in a word, impossible where the Chinaman is.

Independent of the Commissairs, and working in their own little circle, is to be found that extraordinary politico-financial undertaking, the Russo-Chinese Bank. Previous to the Boxer business, branches of this important Bank had been established at the provincial capitals of Manchuria nominally in order to facilitate the work of railway construction. The Kirin branch of the Bank even borrowed the use of the Kirin provincial mint from the Military Governor so as to have a sufficient supply of silver dollars to pay railway workmen. After the great invasion, the Bank, like everything else Russian, decided on a forward policy, and began to open out in many new directions. Treating the Kuantung territory as part of Manchuria, we find that to-day there are branches at Port Arthur, Dalny, Newchwang, Moukden, Tiehling, K'uan-ch'êng-tzu, Kirin, Harbin, Tsitsihar, and Khailar—an imposing list at first sight, and one calculated to make the beginner believe that Manchuria's finances had already passed into Russian hands. This is, however, only another myth; let us explode it.

First, the Newchwang branch is at an open port where there are other banks, and where people are interested in more or less legitimate trade. Then

the Port Arthur and Dalny branches are of course on territory properly leased to the Russian, and are therefore perfectly permissible. The Harbin office is in a great railway centre, which is nearly purely Russian, and which must have general banking facilities. Moukden, under the American and Japanese Treaties, is to be an open port, and other banks will soon be found there, war or no war. Remains, therefore, only the sadly diminished number of Tiehling, K'uan-ch'êng-tzu, Kirin, Tsitsihar, and Khailar. Khailar has about as much general trade and as big a population as a second-class South Sea island, and is quite beyond the pale —that is, outside the Hsing-an mountains, and therefore cut off from real Manchuria. Of the four other offices, two are in provincial capitals, and have some political significance, and two, Tiehling and K'uan-ch'êng-tzu, are attempting to attract trade to the railway by granting exceptional facilities to Chinese merchants. It is worthy of note that another branch which was opened for the same trade purposes at Liaoyang, has had to be closed on account of the absolute lack of business. What is there left of the remarkable tale that this institution is collecting and banking Manchuria's taxes and duties? Nothing at all except at the open port of Newchwang, where British sloth has allowed the Russian Bank to usurp Chinese authority and impound the Chinese customs receipts. Newchwang is, however, being treated separately, so it is unnecessary to expand at present on this interesting

subject. At all other places in Manchuria the Bank is vainly trying to cut into business it can never succeed in annexing. Its one great desire is to become the intermediary between Chinese traders at the seaports and the great Chinese hongs in the interior, engaged in handling the produce of the country. If one is to believe the evidence of one's eyes, and what the Chinese all agree in saying, no success whatsoever has attended this venture, for the Bank's commercial affairs have a curious fatality in always ending badly, and need not be feared until methods are vastly changed.

Mr. Alexander Ular, who is treated with quite undeserved confidence by European publicists, states that in every branch of the Russo-Chinese Bank in Manchuria there is a department which undertakes the collection of Government moneys (Chinese, of course, he means), pays out salaries to Government officials, that is, to Chinese officials, and that complete success has attended this daring usurpation of Chinese authority. Mr. Ular may be an admirable scientist and sociologist, but it would be incorrect to classify his acquaintance with real Manchuria as anything but elementary. I have been forced elsewhere to challenge directly nearly all his statements and show their absolute baselessness. In the case of the Russian Bank his writing is sheer invention.

The Russo-Chinese Bank is rightly or wrongly considered by the Petersburg Government as one of their most powerful weapons of offence in Man-

churia. But it seems to me that even the most rabid Russophil cannot pretend that any important results have been gained by it during the past three years. Indeed, a close examination has led me to the conclusion that, on the contrary, the Manchurian managers are terribly disappointed with the present state of affairs, and that if it were not for the fact that the Russian Government allows abnormal profits to be made in certain directions, there can be but little doubt that grave deficits would be shown in every account, leading to a most severe crisis. For it is quite certain that of the ten Manchurian and Kuantung branches there are only three that are earning any money at all. These are the Newchwang office, because of the customs and likin moneys handled; the Port Arthur branch, where the immense victualling trade and the high interest and discount rates ruling mean temporary profits of a non-regular character; and at Harbin, where the railway receipts and other moneys are all loaned out at usurious rates on mortgages.

But business profits and the impounding of customs revenues at one seaport hardly constitute the capture of Manchurian revenue *in toto*, about which we have been so often told. The native finances of the three eastern provinces are in any case extremely complicated and cannot even be understood except after years of careful study. The methods of collecting Government moneys and the general machinery necessitate the employment of armies of minor officials, whose receipts are more

Some Avengers of 1900.

often reckoned in cash than in any other larger denomination. How impossible all this is for Europeans to attempt without enormous preparatory work anyone who has lived in the Far East can readily understand. The four great sources of revenue in Manchuria are: first, the land tax, from which all Bannermen are exempt; second, the salt gabelle; third, the foreign customs and native likin levies; and fourth, minor taxes and licences of every description, such as taxes collected on the sales of cattle, land, houses, gold, metals, &c., &c., and licences for carts, opium dealers, distilleries, and native boats. It is true that the Newchwang customs and likin revenues are banked at the Russo-Chinese Bank pending the final solution of the Manchurian difficulty, but it is necessary to point out that the collection is in the hands of the former employees and that it is only the weakness of the British Government, and not of the Chinese, which has permitted such unblushing robbery to take place. The land taxes could never be successfully collected by any but Chinese, and no one is foolish enough to pretend, even among the Russians in Manchuria, that the seven Banks in inland places, manned at most by two dozen men, have been able to tamper with this greatest source of provincial revenue. In every town I visited in Manchuria, the bankers and officials assured me that from the February of 1902—China's New Year—their tax-books have been the same as before. Again, salt, although a Government monopoly, is

farmed out on a most intricate system, and the levies are entirely collected through the intermediary of the great native guilds, which have always successfully resisted the Russians. As for the minor taxes and licences, these are levied so mysteriously that there is no one European living to-day who could give a succinct account of the methods adopted or can understand the why and the wherefore of any part of the procedure.

Then again Manchurian domestic taxation has never been sufficient to meet the very heavy military expenditure yearly incurred by the provincial Governments; and so six provinces of China send in quarterly contributions to meet the heavy burden. And, leaving the Chinese side of the question, it is to be noticed that there are no branches of the Russo-Chinese Bank except in Chinese towns. How then can anyone believe in the existence of populous Russian settlements, new towns with growing populations, without banking facilities available? I ask this question merely because it has become such a habit with some people to believe in Russia's invincibility in Asia, that in spite of the categorical account of the railway and the railway towns which I have given elsewhere many will still believe that Manchuria is largely Russian. It is noteworthy that with the single exception of Harbin every branch of the Russo-Chinese Bank is leaning on the Chinese in Chinese towns and getting mighty little support. Commercial communities cannot exist without banks, and even the

Russian cannot do all his banking by moving his rouble notes into and out of his own pockets.

Finally, the third department of the Petersburg bureaucracy represented in the provincial capitals is the Asiatic division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Consuls-General have been appointed at Moukden, Kirin, and Tsitsihar, and are doing what they can. These Consular officials have been trained at Peking, and having absorbed a certain amount of the Chinese idea, alone of all the Russian officials in Manchuria show any sense or special acquaintance with the country. The result has been considerable friction between the military, the diplomatic, and the financial agents, perhaps more interested in departmental victories than in anything else. In fact, since things outside have become so threatening, the rivals have likewise become more and more savage, until it has been necessary for the "Viceroy of the Far East" to interfere. In a stern memorandum he counsels the representatives of the various departments to remember that they are working in a common cause and that petty jealousies will not be tolerated. Outside the walls of the provincial capitals the Russian authorities have almost ceased to interfere except spasmodically. The post commanders at Liaoyang, Hai-ch'êng, and other places in Fengtien have again and again attempted to enter into intimate relations with the Chinese civil authorities. But prompt offers of substantial presents in silver have soon induced the military to desist, and if it were not for the uncer-

tainty and annoyance that large bodies of armed aliens always produce, things would be exactly where they were before the Boxer year.

The impartial critic who has read all that has been written, cannot help admitting that the entire Russian expansion system must have the gravest defects if one of its greatest efforts has so completely miscarried. In spite of the fifty thousand armed men on the railway, in spite of Commissair bullyings, in spite of threats, outrages, and many other things, the Chinese administrative machinery has remained undamaged. It is a bit clogged with rust, but that is all. One effort, sweep the Russians back and the Manchurian years 1900 to 1903 will remain only an evil dream, like all the other epoch-making and thrilling events of 1900, which the world thought the end of all things in the Far East.

CHAPTER XX

FROM PETUNA TO NINGUTA BY RIVER AND RAIL

My launch captain was glad to see me again, although he objected to the disrespectful terms I applied to his tub. However, so long as you have what both we and the Chinese call "a good heart," you will succeed with them, for they dearly love you when you are "human," as the Americans say. But do not let your humanity extend so far that you become sarcastic. Sarcasm is taboo in China; it is the last expression of disrespect—the culminating insult without redress. Swear and curse, if you like, beginning duly with your victim's female slave, and continuing in a rising gamut of indignation until the eighteenth generation of ancestors is reached and surpassed, and descending again until you have likened him unto the spawn or egg of a tortoise; but do nothing else. Play the game as it is played in China, and do not introduce unauthorised versions which show your illiteracy and mental clumsiness. Also do not be familiar even though you become intimate. Familiarity breeds something worse than contempt in China.

Jabbering pidgin at the wheel-house, for the southern Chinaman's attempts at the northern dialect are hideous to listen to, we descended the Sungari in great style and still greater speed, for this time the launch was dragging no clumsy junk after her, but hastening as fast as she could down to Harbin, where a hard task awaited her. Three junks must be hauled slowly up to Kirin city before the ice-fiend gripped the river, and then the little launch's labours would be over until May, and the captain might hibernate on half-pay just as he pleased. This is what he told me after we had cleared the crowd of junks and were tooting merrily along. The fat coolie had disappeared as men change or disappear mysteriously all over China, and in his place was the queerest-looking creature I have ever seen, engaged on the eternal task of splitting wood for the engine-room. He was not five feet high, and was mainly clothed in long Russian boots and a short sheepskin coat; on his head was a skull-cap of thick brown felt, across which were traced weird designs in faded imitation gold braid. His head, instead of being shaved and pig-tailed like those of his shipmates, was covered with a curious mixture of rusty-red and jet-black hair. Mystified by his appearance, I asked him from where he sprang; but he did not greet my efforts as they should have been greeted. He remained silent, which is serious among Chinamen. I turned in mute appeal to the captain, for I could not be thus out-bluffed by a subordinate and retain possession of

that important thing, my face. The captain was sympathetic but not encouraging, and laconically informed me that his mother was a Mongol and that his father was "little different"! It eventually transpired that this brave little specimen was the result of a temporary alliance between a booted Russian trading along Amur, near the mouth of Sungari, and a Fish-skin Tartar maid, and that the offspring was a little shy on the subject of his ancestry. At least that is what I gathered. Time in its course certainly gives birth to some strange things, but up here in the Far North you soon get used to all kinds of strange hybrids.

Turning from humanity to nature, I observed, that as we approached Shih-shui-yingtzu, which lies on the banks of the Sungari near the junction of this river with my muddy and sandy friend the Nonni, vast marshy lands surrounded us, covered with reeds and coarse grass growing many feet high. Above these ideal feeding grounds, enormous flights of half-a-dozen different kinds of wild-fowl rose as we passed and filled the air with hoarse croakings and cries. The great wild goose of the north predominated, although already he had doubtless migrated in vast droves, as is his yearly custom, to the more temperate climes of central and southern China. At Shih-shui-yingtzu, there were big native ferry boats crossing to and fro, filled with native passengers, and draft animals still harnessed to their loads. The mules, donkeys, ponies, and oxen, mixed impartially, and utterly impassive, gazed at the launch

and its dirty energy with a stolidness outrivalling that of the carters themselves, and seemed to tell me with their eyes that progress and the twentieth century had but little yet to do with Manchuria, which would go on with its methodical development regardless of the foolish West and the still more foolish Russian who would outrage time.

On we went as hard as we could down the river, and the by-product of Fish-skin Tartarism found time to justify one-half of his ancestry by throwing some lines overboard armed with heavy hooks, which he assured me would catch something sooner or later. All northern Manchuria rivers swarm with a kind of salmon called the tamara, and sturgeon are also caught in great quantities. Sure enough we caught some fish during the day, but I regret to say that we also caught something very disagreeable. One of the lines seemed very taut, so I went aft to haul it in. As I pulled away I was surprised to find that I was nearly jerked overboard, and I called to the skipper to help me. Imagine our disgust when a dead man came to the surface. I suggested cutting the line at once, but the Chinaman is not so easily nauseated, and is withal a very curious animal. I was laughed at, and asked if I had never seen a dead man before. They jerked a rope round the dead man's shoulders, and, hauling him half out of the water, gazed closely into his face. It was not a pleasant face, but the dead man was new, in the elegant language of one of the crew, and consequently interesting as far as corpses go. They

Down a

An Historic Picture. The Great Review of Defiance held at Port

A Manch

CEFUL CREEK.

THUR BY VICEROY ALEXEIEFF AFTER EVACUATION DAY, OCTOBER 8TH, 1903.

AN FARM.

finally satisfied themselves that no one knew him on board, and so let him drop back into the river. A hole in the back of his head showed that he had met with a violent death, and that was the only clue found. This was absolutely nothing for northern Manchuria, for life is very cheap here, and, as in all newly-settled countries that are badly policed, violence is an argument very often employed.

In spite of gruesome corpses we continued our journey as rapidly as the launch could be driven. Hour after hour we passed monotonous mud-banks, twisted round sudden corners, and shot ever onwards towards the north-west. Sometimes the long regular drills of kaoliang stalks, looking like a three days' beard on the face of some enormous yellow giant, ran down nearly to the water's edge, showing the presence of Chinese farms and Chinese settlers. Sometimes there was nothing to be seen but huge stretches of swamp and virgin soil—the Manchuria of olden days that has yet to be conquered by the mattock and spade of the Shantung emigrant. Notwithstanding the bright sunshine, however, a gloom had fallen over the crew. Grim stories of violence and robbery were told and retold, and each man pushed closer to his neighbour. The corpse, even though it had been greeted with rough jests and rude comments, had evidently revived many half-forgotten memories, for Manchuria has had its bellyful of experiences during the past ten years, and every man has his tale to tell. Battle, murder, and sudden death have often been its lot,

but never so much as during the past decade ; and if its soil is one of the most fertile in the Far East, it also breeds a race of men that are no poltroons, and who draw the knife and pistol as quickly as any Texan cowboy.

One man of our crew particularly drew my attention. He was tall and gaunt, and tanned to a colour as dark as that of any Sikh. On his right hand he had but three stumps of fingers, and these he looked at thoughtfully as he listened to the low-toned talk. Catching my eye at last he spoke, and nothing could exceed the dramatic force of his simple language. "These," he said, pointing to his hand, "went in the Japanese war. You foreigners laugh at us Chinese and say that we are afraid to die. Bah! have you ever seen a Chinaman who was afraid to die when he knew he was losing his head of his own free will? This matter of my hand occurred in the first moon of the second year of the Japanese war. I was a carter at the time in the district of Hai-ch'êng, and I owned my own cart and my own mules. Then the Japanese crossed the Korean river. First they fought at Hsin Yen in the east ; then they came on to Hai-ch'êng, and there was a big battle. Our men were, of course, beaten back, and they all fled west towards Newchwang. All was confusion for some time, but at last orders came from Peking that the town of Hai-ch'êng must be recaptured at all costs. I, who had run away with the others, was impressed as a soldier by a military mandarin, and was made to fight too, although I did not know

why. Nearly all of us were country people who could shoot, but our guns were no use and we had only ten cartridges for each man. On the first moon of the New Year the first attack was made, and we were beaten back. Nevertheless, that moon we were ordered to make another attack, although we had then no food and no ammunition. This time it was night when we arrived outside the city, and we waited lying on the ground for daylight to come. At four o'clock we moved forward, and by six we were beaten back again by the big guns, losing many men. I, because I was strong and big, was in the centre with the banners. As we were retreating, the Ko-Lo-Pao (machine guns) were run out against us, and the bullets rained on us from all sides. After about five minutes, something kicked me on the shoulder. I looked down and saw blood coming out. I was hit, and bleeding badly. Then our men started running very fast, and I was left behind. All were throwing down their guns, and so I stopped and picked up a pistol that I knew I could sell. As I picked it up it seemed to burn my hand away. I looked down and saw that some of my fingers were broken and some missing. The pain was very great, although my hands were so cold from the snow that I could scarcely move them. Then I sat down and cried, for I thought I would die. Presently the ground felt no longer cold, although thick ice and snow were everywhere, and I slept like from opium. When I woke it was night and all was dark. A long way off, a very long way it was, I saw some

lights moving. I could not walk fast, because I was so stiff, but I crawled until that got better and then I walked. After much walking I came up to the lights. They were carried by Japanese soldiers who were looking for dead and wounded. I showed them my hand and my shoulder, but they said there were too many of us and that they had no room. But they gave me some hot water and some cold rice, and told me that I must walk to Newchwang, which was a hundred li away. So in three days I walked there, and the foreign doctor cut off my fingers, although he said a foreigner would have had to lose his whole arm. Soon I was better, and in spring I was quite well. Now will you say I am afraid, although I was beaten?"

This is a typical story of Manchuria, and plainly shows why the Chinese so often make a pitiable exhibition. In battle they are led like sheep to the slaughtering-ground, and left there to die and rot away. Can you wonder, then, that they have no confidence either in themselves or their leaders, and that things always turn out unfortunately for them? Give, however, Manchurian levies the stiff-lipped officers of a Wei-Hai-Wei regiment, and you will see them stand firm in the face of anything that mortal man can stand. The North Chinaman will yet make one of the finest, and certainly one of the most hardy, soldiers in the world. And this little story is illustrative of other things, for it shows how, in Manchuria, a man may be a carter or workman one day, a soldier the next, a freebooter a week

later, because he has been left with nothing to eat, —and so on, changing his vocation from month to month.

After this confidence the crew got expansive and threw Chinese caution to the winds. They went down into smelly quarters and brought out their weapons with exultant pride. Three Mauser automatic revolvers, one Colt pistol, and half a dozen rifles was the sum total of the secret armament of that launch, and the men pleaded guilty to occasionally doing a little holding-up on their own account whenever the opportunity was favourable. So this is what occurs on the river Sungari, a few miles from Harbin, which is the very centre of that curious thing which Mr. Ular has dubbed the Russo-Chinese Empire.

Meanwhile the hours had sped by rapidly, and the river was broadening out into the mighty Sungari, that sweeps so majestically into the Amur. At four o'clock we passed the mouth of the Lanling Ho, a swampy tributary that meanders through mere marshlands and is useless for anything but small sampans. We had done upwards of one hundred miles in nine hours, which is not bad going for a crazy launch in the very centre of Manchuria, though we were much helped by the current. Here the Sungari for a few miles suddenly becomes a mild edition of the lower Yangtse; ahead of us was one big island and a number of smaller ones, with muddy waters stretching for thousands of yards on either side.

Clouds of geese flapped over our heads as we steamed by, and screamed indignantly as some of us fired at them with Mausers and match-locks in the vain hope of bringing something down.

By six o'clock we were only twenty-five miles from Harbin, but the sun had already set and it was very dark and most bitter cold. In spite of all talk of bribes, the captain was getting doubtful about the wisdom of driving at eleven knots an hour down the river, and wished at least to slow down. I insisted, however, and so we did not stop. I was showing them what could be done, for my travelling was at an unexampled rate, seeing that we were only taking hours where others required at least two days. By eight o'clock the look-out man sighted junk and steamer lights ahead, and we were forced to slow down at last, and creep along in fear and trembling. Before nine we had reached the southern limit of the Sungari shipping, which only hugs the right bank of the Harbin side and leaves the left bank entirely free. Once more the captain wished to stop, fearful of what might happen to him for thus cruising about in the night, but again I forced him most unwillingly on. I wished to land at a spot in the centre of Rational Harbin, where I knew my way about and would stand in no danger of getting into trouble. No one had the slightest idea as to what had happened during the last few days, and I was at last getting cautious. Finally, after a few anxious moments, the great

railway bridge stood up in front of us against the dark horizon, and puff, puff, rumbled a late train over the iron way, with its enormous head-light blazing like the eye of some irate monster.

"Now," I said to the captain, "this will do; land me quickly." We pushed into the bank cautiously against the long line of sternwheelers and cargo boats, amidst hoarse challenges and cries, and at last we bumped. I had reached my destination.

The captain duly received his cumshaw, the crew their promised dollars, and I stumbled up the great railway embankment that shuts in the river like some Dutch dyke. Behind me one of the crew staggered with my traps, moaning and grumbling continuously as he barked his shins against wire hawsers and the awful miscellaneous litter which marks every Russian landing-place. At last we managed to climb through to the first road, lighted by one solitary oil lamp, whose feeble rays only served to intensify the gloom. A carriage passed, furiously driven—my first sight of the foreigner and his works for a number of days. Then we started vainly wailing for an isvostchick after the mournful Russian manner, but not a sound was to be heard nor a soul to be seen. Presently came a steady tramp, tramp, in the distance, and we moved back into the shadows. . . . Something was clearly amiss in Harbin, and perhaps war had really come. A group of black shadows pushed out of the darkness and marched steadily away not a dozen yards off. As they passed under the street lamp the light for a

minute played on shining bayonets. An armed patrol marching the streets of Harbin at night! So things were evidently stoking up in Russian Manchuria, and the necessity became more urgent that I should at once sink myself speedily in the common herd. So we slid down the street as fast as possible, and finally found a conveyance. The isvostchick looked mightily suspicious, for strangers who start out in the night with their slender baggage trooping after them, and are clad in semi-Chinese attire, are not exactly popular in Harbin. Bluff, however, was my game, and, muttering something about the parahod from Harbarovsk being late (is there such a thing as a passenger steamer from the Amur nowadays, I wonder?), I told him to drive to the inn I had previously patronised. By way of encouragement I likewise shifted an excellent revolver, that was really far more danger to myself than to my enemies, from one pocket to another. You have no idea how rough things can be at night in Harbin, and it is the man who draws first blood who is the most respected. All of which made me somehow believe that there was something very wrong in the town since I had left. I managed to find time during the short drive to perform an acrobatic feat which will commend itself to all who have driven in the great railway city. I changed my sheepskin coat for one of more civilised aspect, only falling once on the floor of the drosky, and certainly without broken bones. The Harbin streets will not

Chinese Cart. Near the Banks of the Liao River.

require much trenching if war comes, for the wheel traffic has already done that most successfully.

At the hotel I was greeted curiously and offered my old room, which I promptly refused. The memories of that awful mattress were too recent, and I prefer iron neat instead of under the disguised form which obtains in Harbin. In the restaurant I was at once struck with the number of officers present, and their changed manner. All were in full war-paint, with revolvers strapped on, ammunition pouches ready, and their inseparable swords at their sides. I was muttered at as I passed, for I was an Englishman and therefore a suspect. Two Frenchmen sitting at an adjoining table, who, under the benevolent protection of the much-renowned Dual Alliance, could apparently hunt with the wolves to their hearts' content, soon enlightened me with their loud conversation.

Briefly put, Harbin had got a bad attack of the nerves, which was merely the prelude to the attack of bad men desirous of disturbing the peace of the Russo-Chinese Empire. The vague rumours which had been floating round for days had at last crystallised into one appalling report. War with Japan was imminent and had already come in fact, and the ball was to be opened in this part of the country by a grand attack of hunghutzu, officered by picked men from crack Japanese regiments who had sworn to take Harbin or die. Already it appeared that Kirin city was almost surrounded by Chinese desperadoes—that they were getting more and more

desperate (in what form was not stated), and that anything might shortly be expected. Patrols patrolled Harbin by night and by day; a number of arrests had been made of Japanese spies who had detailed plans of Harbin's fortifications (I did not know that Harbin was fortified). Twenty thousand Russian troops from the trans-Baikal had entered Manchuria from the west and were even now detraining at the station. Business was at a stand-still; and, worst of all, a new café-chantant troupe, that everybody said was the best thing east of the Urals, had been sternly countermanded. This was the crowning blow of all apparently, for what was there to do in Harbin if the cafés-chantants were going to shut down! All this I gathered in a very few minutes, and the never-ending entry and departure of numberless officers—Cossacks, Siberian infantry men, artillerymen, in fact, every corps even down to the despised railway guards—gave colour to these stirring stories and made one dream of charging squadrons and the dull thud and roar of the big guns. So I felt that my arrival had been most opportune, and I called loudly for more drinks and waited for developments.

Presently there was a general adjournment to the adjoining preserve of wine, women, and song. I seized the excellent opportunity afforded to present myself to the talkative Frenchmen and inquired what had really happened in Harbin during the past week. By way of introduction I said I had just arrived from Irkutsk, and knew nothing.

But I merely heard the same story over again, although the number of reinforcing troops rose unaccountably to at least thirty thousand and the hunghutzu were allowed without a protest to cover an even greater area of poor disturbed Manchuria. The Frenchmen were delightful fellows, but they knew no more about Manchuria's inner working after a residence of a couple of years in Harbin than children do of the Higher Criticism. And it is the same with every Russian in Manchuria, almost without exception. They know Port Arthur and Dalny, which by the way are not Manchuria at all but the Kuantung leased territory, and they may have gone to Harbin or passed it en route, but that is all. I heard one ridiculous statement after another made unchallenged and only the very slightest encouragement was needed for them to continue spinning absurdities by the hour.

Presently we were joined by a Russian officer, who looked immensely busy and frowned horribly with the weight of his responsibilities. He spoke fair French, which is an exceedingly rare thing in the Manchurian army of occupation, and also knew all about Kirin province, or at least so he assured us. He likewise spoke Chinese of that variety perfectly intelligible to the Chinaman who has a firm grip of pidgin Russian. Generally speaking, the Russian who can say "chih fan," and make grotesque signs with his hands, is accounted a past master in the language and worthy of all respect.

Anyone who speaks real Chinese at any of the stations is immediately surrounded by a delighted crowd of Manchurians and nondescripts, who gaze upon his features with awe. The usual comment heard from Russian mouths is that the speaker must be a German, for the Siberian apparently looks upon members of the happy Fatherland as the only people who penetrate into the secrets of the mysterious east. The German is the Russian's schoolmaster.

Thus we passed the night in pleasant if somewhat idiotic talk and had supper at regular intervals of two hours after the fashionable manner of the place. Harbin prices, it is true, are almost as disastrous as those of Klondyke, but after Chinese inns one is entitled to some relaxation.

By morning I had pieced together everything sufficiently accurately to know that all Harbin's talk was mere wind, arising from what the American picturesquely calls "cold feet," and that the inhabitants knew no more about what was really going on than the empty tins and bottles that so largely decorated the town. I consequently decided to go on to Ninguta, cost what it might, and not cut short my journey, in spite of all the wars and rumours of war. So, in the course of time, I duly found myself in a railway carriage, and in the fulness of my joy once more gave the same magnificent *pourboire* to the same magnificent porter, duly securing for myself an entire compartment which could be held against all comers. The Harbin porters are the

only nice civilian Russians in the whole of Manchuria, but they are very expensive.

Meanwhile, the train stood stock-still, and apparently had no intention of moving. You soon get used to this in Manchuria, but after we had waited for an hour or so, even Russian passengers became both alarmed and indignant. Around us the scene was full of animation. Dense crowds of howling Chinese filled the station, trying to board trains that were leaving for the south. The great winter exodus had already begun, and the war scare was helping it along with extraordinary vigour. Extra trains had been despatched for days, they told me, and still the crowds did not diminish in numbers. Some Chinese, in answer to my questions, told me that they had been at the station for several days, and that they had paid bribes right and left without being able to get off. All had from fifty to two hundred roubles savings, the result of seven months' work under the Russian *régime* of absurd prices, and all were highly anxious to get home for the winter and feast it in distant Shantung. If the German ever makes any success with Kaio-chou and the adjoining hinterland, it will be largely due to the travelling rouble, for the Shantung coolie in his tens of thousands is bringing back yearly what are immense sums for poverty-stricken people, and these are going a long way towards making the poorest province in China to some extent affluent, and, therefore, able to travel on German railways and buy German goods.

In Manchuria itself, every day fresh signs may be seen by the intelligent observer of how the Russian is being bled to death by the Chinaman, and will be ruined in the long run if he is not more careful—war or no war—for the Bear is no match for the Dragon in times of peace. We are told by someone that the Scotchman can live where the Jew starves. Well, be assured that the Chinaman can grow rich where the Scotchman's daily task would merely be the tightening of his belt and calling on the gods of his fathers to help him in his dire extremity. Roughly, I should say, one Jew equals ten Russians; one Scotchman equals two Jews; and, finally, one Chinaman equals three Scotchmen. Therefore, one Chinaman is equal to sixty Russians! And observe that the Chinaman I am using as a basis for my calculation is the Chinaman of the north, whose business capacity is insignificant compared to that of the Chehkiang and Canton merchant. When these latter make their way up north in increasing numbers, as they are already beginning to do, the position of the Russian will be even more parlous than it is at present. So until the Muscovite becomes vastly different he can have no permanent success in the far East.

Amidst these statistical reflections, the train moved off unexpectedly. It is roughly 200 miles to Ninguta; twelve into 200 goes, say, sixteen times, so it would take sixteen hours more or less to cover the distance, allowing always that we were not the regular bi-weekly express. Had we been an express

there is some probability that we would have covered fifteen miles an hour.

The first part of the country on the road to Ninguta is dull—at least it is flat and without distinguishing features. The only thing that you can console yourself with is the thought that the soil is just as wonderfully rich as in other parts of the country, but that is all, and even a rich soil ceases to be attractive after some hours. There were always the same fields of closely cropped stubble, succeeded by patches of waste, and cut here and there by muddy creeks and a few solitary willows. Hour after hour you travel through dozens of miles of country with the same landscape, but imperceptibly you are approaching a series of hills and high table-lands that run down to the sea to Vladivostock. This has necessitated tunnelling, and so hills have been duly tunnelled. I have already said how the Russian engineer appears to hate the very word tunnel and longs only for open-cuts. Well, the small tunnels between Harbin and the Ussuri districts were contracted to German and Austrian engineers, and very well has their work been done. It is only in this extreme east of Manchuria and in the Hsing-an Mountains in the west that the Chinese Eastern Railway encountered any engineering difficulties at all. The rest has been mere child's play, for bridge building over shallow rivers cannot be classed as a difficult feat.

Meanwhile, day passed into night, and night again into day, and finally, very tired and disgrace-

fully dirty, I tumbled off the train at the station from where the road leads to Ninguta. Once more I had arrived at a temporary terminus after forty-eight hours of varied experiences, and with Slav and Chinaman so mixed up in my sleepy mind, that I could hardly realise what it was all about.

CHAPTER XXI

THE HUNGHUTZU, OR THE RED-BEARD BRIGAND OF THE NORTH

THE hunghutzu has become such a familiar figure of speech in the Press and is so constantly referred to as one of the excuses for Russia's continued occupation of Manchuria, that he merits some attention and explanation. Translated literally "hunghutzu" may mean red-beard, or it may mean something else; for it depends entirely on the Chinese characters what the correct translation really is. There are some, and they are well-informed, who argue that it is merely the phonetic transliteration of Chinese characters which has given rise to the present expression of red-beard, and that originally "hung" did not stand for red, nor "hutzu" for beard. However, these are sinologue subtleties which do not interest the ordinary person. Suffice it to say that, right or wrong, the expression "red-beard" has passed into daily use and that the vernacular Press endorses this by using the "hung-red" and "hutzu-beard"

characters without qualification, explanation, or apology.

The brigand of the north is therefore a "red-beard" duly accepted as such. As a matter of fact the beard is not commonly met with in real life. However, even the brigand Chinaman loves his own history exceedingly, and so has dug back into the past and borrowed from the earlier dynasties a familiar form of disguise which he may assume if the spirit moves him in order to strike terror into all hearts. In China, masks, false beards, moustaches, bushy eyebrows, and colour-stains of all sorts have always figured largely in the mythical and actual make-up of wrongdoers; and valiant men sallying forth on evil bent are generally pictured by native artists clothed in some grotesque disguise and hideous with awful beards.

The hunghutzu of the north is the direct outcome of four things—to wit, the enormous extent of the unsettled districts in Manchuria, the laxity of Chinese control in provinces which are still nominally military-administered, the severe climatic conditions and hardships of life during the long winter, and finally the large numbers of political and other convicts banished to the outer confines of the Empire, who, supposed to be labouring on the post-road under the supervision of officials, are able to purchase their "absence" and indulge in evil deeds. With these four great factors working in its favour, it has not been a hard thing for the immense north to conceive and bear this interesting personage.

But before discussing the real hunghutzu further, let us first take a glance at what Mr. Alexander Ular, whose fairy tales receive such credence in both England and France, has to say about him—then, having finished up the mythical, we will attack the prosaic. Mr. Ular in twenty-three pages of a small volume successfully annexes Manchuria to Russia-Manchuria, with a population of twenty millions and roughly twenty-five hundred millions of acres, and gives voice on the "Khongkhouses," as he calls them, in a manner which has created undisguised merriment in Manchuria. It serves a useful purpose to quote this writer, for he admirably represents the misconceptions which most writers have on Manchurian sidelights, misconceptions which have done much to give rise to the present state of affairs. He writes:—

"These Khongkhouses were the former workmen of certain gold mines the Chinese Government was engaged in in exploiting Manchuria. Complications in the administration of these mines gave birth to these 'hunghutzu,' whose entire history and subsequent development are indeed the little-suspected and dangerous consequence of these Government mining operations. The nature of the country in which the auriferous deposits of Manchuria are found necessitated a special organisation being made for the mines and this was carried out by the Chinese Government with great skill. Indeed, so excellent were the measures adopted to secure the food and living of the miners that they were subsequently copied by the Russians when they themselves commenced mining operations in Siberia. Storehouses for provisions and clothing were established by the Chinese; roads were cut; barrack-like buildings erected; a general working plan adopted and finally miners

were obtained. The wages paid these men were relatively high for China, the allowance being four sous a day (query, twenty cents?) And besides food and clothing the State supplied all tools necessary. All this however was not enough to make men forget the climate and the country in which they lived, which resemble those of the Farthest North. In winter the cold is so severe that it dries up all the dampness in the air and produces a mist full of needle points of ice which oppress the breathing and cause terrible hemorrhages of the lungs. Crows and other birds fall senseless to the ground smitten by the cold. For days and even for weeks on end everyone is forced to remain indoors, a torture to the Chinaman who loves cleanliness (*sic*). In summer neither clouds nor rain give one a moment's respite from the heat of a pitiless sun. Swarms of mosquitoes prevent one from lifting even for a second the covering which must protect the face. And in addition to all these things there were the difficulties of work; the isolation; the absence of news. Under these circumstances recruiting for labour became more and more difficult, until all the authorities had to be content with the very dregs of the people. From this it was not a very far step to deporting to the mines convicts and thus working them partly with forced labour. . . . .

"As is the case with all men insufficiently paid, the miners, consisting of indifferent workmen, deported without compensation, badly treated, badly paid, or not paid at all, readily persuaded themselves that the managers and the engineers, for the most part young men, served no useful purpose. But instead of striking and refusing to work, these merely deserted. The mountainous country surrounding the mines was uninhabited and covered with impenetrable forest. By going there it was possible to evade the terrible Chinese gold laws. Tens of thousands of workmen and deported convicts escaped, and began extracting gold on their own account, and in time a secret traffic in this gold sprang up between them and Russian and Chinese traders.

"Although the Government was powerless to act against

these deserters the authorities continued to send more vagabonds and convicts to the mines, who in time followed the example of their predecessors and so gradually the adjacent deserts became peopled with an outlawed population. These gold washers were liable to severe punishment for deserting; and for indulging in the forbidden industry of gold mining, to the extreme penalty of Chinese law, summary decapitation."

Here Mr. Ular breaks off the narrative and indulges in a long-winded discourse on Chinese socialism. En passant, he dubs these convicts "Khongkhouses"; he mentions how they organised themselves into miniature republics; how finally all the gold-bearing valleys of Manchuria became occupied by these people; and then, when the gold began to give out, how self-preservation forced these tens of thousands of men to band together and form one vast confederation.

He then goes on to say that the most celebrated group of men founded the republic of Sholtoga in the seventies (where the Moho mines of to-day are situated). He describes the organisation of this republic with a wealth of detail which speaks well for his imagination; gives some interesting population and sexual statistics, and then suddenly switches off to a general discussion of "Khongkhouses," letting fall casually that the republic of Sholtoga "perished a victim to the measures undertaken by the Chinese Government." Finally, after the Chino-Japanese war and a few pages of reading, we find the last survivors of the "Khongkhouses" "shut in among the gloomy valleys of Keichan

where, tortured by hunger and cold, they awaited their final agony." A gloomy picture indeed and a warning to all republics!

But here we must again let Mr. Ular have the stage, for it is only meet and proper that he be given full credit.

"This tragedy was fated to become a comedy. The Russian Empire on the point of swallowing Manchuria, required an enemy which would make Europe believe in the existence of a war. It was then that the Khongkhouses were thought of. This insignificant enemy, always to be bought off for a few roubles, was to prove the salvation of Russia's questionable policy.

"Numbering about two hundred men, the 'Khongkhouses' crossed the Amur—the frontier of China—beneath the mouths of silent and accomplice Russian cannon and plundered a few peasant huts on Russian territory. It is this act of small importance which has been pompously named the Chinese attack on Russia. This event took place on the 1st July, Russian style, near Blagoveschensk. It was the long-looked-for excuse to officially mobilise the Siberian army which had really been on a war-footing since the month of March. An official despatch, destined above all things to show Europe the manly energy of the Czar in the face of these terrible waves of yellow men, was ostentatiously sent from Petersburg to the Commandant of Blagoveschensk, Gribski. This despatch simply said, 'Throw the Chinese across the Amur.'

"What was merely a diplomatic fanfaronade, was, however, taken literally by Gribski and his Cossacks, dreaming of murder and pillage. So Gribski gave the order to drive away, not the Khongkhouses who, as a matter of fact, had disappeared as soon as their raid was accomplished, but the peaceful inhabitants of the town. . . .

"While the Peking events stopped all interest being taken by Europe in the Russian operations, Grodokof peacefully rode clean across Manchuria. The few remain-

ing bands of 'Khongkhouses,' the last survivors of all the former brigand glory, furnished the excuse for innumerable despatches containing accounts of brilliant victories. The majority of 'Khongkhouses' retired towards the south and on their way they seized the opportunity to destroy a part of the Trans-Manchurian railway and the various stores of railway materials. The 'Khongkhouses' were finally driven away without much trouble by the Russians from all inhabited districts and flung back on the Mongolian deserts. It was deemed imprudent to annihilate them immediately, since their existence might serve in case of necessity as an excuse in the eyes of Europe for undertaking fresh military expeditions which would justify the presence of Russian troops in this quasi-Chinese territory."

I have paid Mr. Ular the tribute of quoting him at this great length, only, I regret, to hold him up to ridicule. Seldom have such picturesque half-truths and non-truths been so cunningly woven together; seldom have political students had the opportunity of reading such pleasant romance in the form of serious history.

In the first place, what Mr. Ular says about Chinese mining operations in northern Manchuria is approximately true, although he greatly exaggerates the terrors of the country. These officially-superintended mining camps have existed for a great number of years and the deserting of miners has always been a serious difficulty. But here the accuracy of Mr. Ular's statements ceases, for the deserters have not generally or of necessity become hunghutzu, as he alleges. On the contrary, they have usually very quietly and very peacefully indulged in private gold washing on their own

account and feared the real hunghutzu much more than anyone else; for, when winter came and it became necessary for them to make their way in small parties to the towns of southern Manchuria or northern Chihli to dispose of their gold dust, more often than not the real hunghutzu were waiting to hold them up.

As for the so-called republic of Sholtoga, this confederation of "bad men" engaged in illicit mining was destroyed not once but several times; and as a matter of fact the leaders were always outlawed Russians and renegade Europeans. I have the pleasure of knowing a man who was a member of this little-known republic for a few months, and I have given much curious information concerning the whole question elsewhere.

What Mr. Ular says about the last of the hunghutzu "who, shut in among the gloomy valleys of Kiechan, tortured by hunger and cold, awaited the final agony," is indeed heartrending, but the tragedy is indeed fated to become a comedy, to use Mr. Ular's own words, for a few years after the final agony should have disposed of these outlaws we find them in 1900, according to Mr. Ular, resuscitated by the travelling rouble and gaily crossing the Amur "under the mouths of silent and accomplice Russian cannon," and indulging in a delightful little looting expedition which must arouse envy in the hearts of the Jameson raiders. It was this, Mr. Ular alleges, which gave the excuse for committing the Blagoveschensk outrage which still

makes men shudder. As a matter of fact, although I am one of the most rigid opponents of the Russian advance south, I cannot let such a deliberate concoction pass. For it is a well-known fact that the Aigun Forts, which are under the command of a Chinese military Deputy-Lieutenant-Governor and lie a few miles below Blagoveschensk, on the Chinese bank of the Amur, fired on Russian ships and practically stopped all navigation for a number of days in obedience to the Chinese Imperial Decree which declared war against Russia; and it was simply the fear which all Russians have always entertained towards the Chinese which prompted the *noyade*.

So far from being mobilised, everything tends to show that the staff arrangements of the Siberian army were upside down in 1900 and that only months of work succeeded in getting troops where they should have been after a few days. No hunghutzu or brigands had anything to do with the Aigun affair, and although, later on, mounted hunghutzu bands in temporary pay of terror-stricken Chinese officials did actually attack Russian columns on the line of march, it was not they but Boxers pure and simple who tore up the railway. Mr. Ular is so careful to go out of his way to say that there were no Boxers in Manchuria in 1900, and it is so important that the real facts in contradistinction to the mythical should be known, that I transcribe again in full the paragraph in which these deliberate misstatements occur.

"The Boxer revolt, which was turning the province of Chihli topsy-turvy, did not spread—about this there is no shadow of doubt, as far as Manchuria. It was therefore necessary, no matter at what cost, to create a state of affairs which would make people believe that similar disturbances had to be faced in Manchuria. For there were never any militant Boxers there and since the Chino-Japanese war, regular Chinese troops have been distinguished by their absence. Fortunately for Russia it was nevertheless possible to find an enemy who would attack the Muscovite power and could easily be made to pass in Europe for Chinese or Boxers. This curious enemy was the 'Khongkhouses'."

As I have already dealt with the destruction wrought by the Boxers in Manchuria, and as such incidents as the Boxer attack on the Newchwang settlement, the Moukden massacres of Christians, the Harbin and Ninguta outbreaks, are well known to every newspaper reader, it is unnecessary for me to say more than that Mr. Ular is pleased to concoct story after story for no purpose apparently except that of arriving at and justifying his extraordinary conclusions. But his statement concerning Chinese garrisons in Manchuria since the Japanese war is even more wild than his other inventions. Mr. Hosie, who was British Consul at Newchwang until April, 1900, states in black and white in his book of that year written previous to the Boxer business :—

"The army of Manchuria is composed of foreign-drilled Chinese troops and a Banner force said to number 25,000 and 40,000 men respectively. It is usual to considerably discount Chinese figures ; but within the last two or three years active recruiting has been carried on and I am inclined

to think that these figures should be added to and not discounted. Indeed, the quantity of Mausers recently imported into Manchuria through the port of Newchwang alone for use in the Fengtien province would suffice to equip an army of about forty thousand men, and it must be remembered that the foreign-drilled troops of the province, amounting to eight thousand men, are already provided with serviceable weapons. There is, besides, an arsenal at Moukden where rifles of all sorts are manufactured and quite recently the conversion of muzzle into breech-loading guns has been made a speciality of the establishment."

This is sufficiently conclusive independent evidence and will probably show more than anything I have written myself the worthlessness of Mr. Ular's statements. And yet he has taken upon himself the task of fully analysing and describing the recent Russian movement and his mythical accounts have partly helped to spread the idea that Russia has really absorbed Manchuria. Having now disposed of a part of the myths which have been so industriously and foolishly circulated in Europe, it is time to get at a few hard facts.

I have already said that four factors were responsible for the latest edition of the Manchurian brigand. For not only is the brigand a familiar figure in Manchuria through all time but he is indeed one of the best known and most important personages in the history of the country.

Who, after all, were the Manchus but old-world brigands and cattle-raiders in the first instance? They have risen, it is true, to the dignity and estate of a dynasty, but in the obscure days of the growing up to the full and mature manhood of Nurhachu—the

founder of their fortunes—their constant raids on the peaceful Chinese-settled and administered areas, known at the time as the Liao-chou-wei, are exactly the same as the later robber-forays of hunghutzu bands which are always disturbing Manchuria.

But coming down to modern times we find that when Newchwang was opened to foreign trade by the Tientsin Treaty of 1858 and the foreign settlement was established in 1861, the local brigands were so bold and daring that it was necessary for the Customs to have an armed guard of sixty men to protect the Custom House against attack. Although as years went on the guards have been called on less and less to take down their rifles, it is a noteworthy fact that this small force continued to exist until the Boxer year of 1900.

As another sample of modern Manchuria, it is recorded that in the sixties a band of five hundred bandits under the command of a Shantung Mahommedan, seized the city of Hsingking, seventy miles east of Moukden, killed all the local officials, and retired unmolested with all the booty they could carry away. Now Hsingking is in the valley of Hootooala—the cradle of the Manchu dynasty—and being the first capital of the young Manchu power, it was looked upon as sacred ground. It will be realised how cool is the Manchurian bandit and how little he cares for the conventionalities of life, for in the ceremonious Far East the pillage of a sacred city is as deliberate and bare-faced an out-

rage as could be planned and shows singular audacity.

But during the sixties brigandage in Manchuria probably reached its height. The dynasty was engaged in a death-struggle with the Taipings in Central China and had no time to pay any attention to Manchuria. The loose hold of the Central Government on the three Eastern Provinces was still further weakened by the drafting away of large bodies of Banner troops to the Yangstze provinces, till the authorities were so weak that they dared not venture outside their Yamens. Murders were of daily occurrence; no man went out of the house unarmed. Field labourers had their matchlocks and spears strapped across their backs while working. Gangs of robbers seized and held to ransom high officials and even big towns. The port of Newchwang was so constantly threatened that the British Consul had to put the place in a state of defence.

In the seventies a change, however, began to take place. Ch'ung Ch'i, a vigorous Governor-General of Fengtien, executed hundreds of robbers and even decapitated gamblers. In 1875 the forcible establishment of order on the northern and eastern frontiers was accomplished by wholesale capital punishment. Sholtoga was wiped out for the first time in that year. A complete reorganisation of the Manchurian forces then took place. The moneyed contributions from the provinces of China proper were largely increased and mobile forces were equipped who engaged in unremitting brigand-

hunting. By the eighties things were much better, but it is interesting to note that in 1885, when James made his famous voyage across the country, he met brigands in Kirin province who calmly watched his party for a time and on deciding that the nut was too hard to crack, quietly disappeared. Again in the same year James says field labourers, north of the Sungari, were constantly to be seen at work with matchlocks lying alongside them in the fields.

Finally, before the iron-horse began the "conquest of Manchuria," we find that Hosie in his voyage from Newchwang to Kirin by cart in 1896 was an eye-witness of a brigand fight and hold-up a few miles distant from the provincial capital. He describes it as merely a tremendous fusillade ending in the robbery of a few fur coats. In that year a thousand brigand heads were supposed to be falling annually, and chain-gangs on their way to provincial capitals to suffer the extreme penalty of the law were to be constantly met with.

But there seems little doubt that the years immediately following after the Japanese war witnessed an abnormal amount of brigandage. In China defeated armies mean that the land is filled for years with desperadoes who have to live as best they can, for the Government pay-rolls are no longer thought of once the soldiers have fought and lost. These disbanded men are only slowly killed off or driven to peaceful pursuits, and in the interim they create a very disturbed state of affairs. By 1899 everything points to the fact that the brigand pest in

Manchuria was much alleviated, and that if it had not been for the Boxer outbreak it would have slowly disappeared as more and more settlers came and filled up the vacant land. I have already described the entire disorganisation of the Chinese civil and military administration of Manchuria, which took place as soon as the Russians began pouring into the country; this sent thousands of soldiers, carters, and other people who could not earn a living into the beloved Manchurian trade.

It is the ex-soldier who has always been the most formidable of all the hunghutzus, for he generally disappears with his rifle, and, if he happens to be a cavalry-man, his pony goes too. Dispersed Chinese troops have a habit of simply turning their coats inside out, throwing away all distinctive badges and starting the gay life of the road. Ex-soldiers are, therefore, more than any others, truly designated as the real hunghutzu or red-beard of Manchuria, for, being presumably recognisable, they generally, when they work in bands, put on false beards or moustaches. They thus very often escape recognition, and avoid the frightful fate which awaits all who have eaten Government salt and forsworn it. The Kuan Ti, or God of War, is always pictured as a demon-like fat man of huge strength with fierce red whiskers, and it is his appearance the ex-soldiers possibly seek to imitate. The mere cry of "hunghutzu!" in a Manchurian village is enough to set all the population running, for the brigands have purposely set in circulation stories of their horrible appearance,

their likeness to veritable men-ogres, so as to strike terror into the hearts of the pigeons they wish to pluck, and violence is therefore very seldom necessary. It is the same principle as that which prompts the painting of huge cannon mouths in the walls and gates of a Chinese city, supposed to dismay the attacking force into immediate flight.

The hunghutzu may, therefore, be divided into a number of varieties of different strength, like strong drink. As a matter of fact, the average Manchurian hunghutzu is merely a more picturesque and gaudy edition of the typical bully, gambler, and "bad man" to be met with all over China. He sticks up a junk up on a creek, or a cart on the road, in company with his friends, as a matter of business when funds are low; the rest of the time he gambles and fights with his associates quite openly in settled towns. For instance, since the Russians have taken possession of Newchwang, well-known characters who were badly wanted under the Chinese *régime* saunter up and down the bund quite unconcernedly and safe from capture, owing to the extraordinary Russian ignorance of the real conditions of the country they wish to conquer. These men are generally, and from preference, armed with the latest type of Mauser automatic revolver, which delights them on account of the excellence and simplicity of the mechanism. A large secret trade has been done in these pistols for years, and Newchwang merchants estimate that the number of men armed with these weapons must run into thousands.

But it is the *ma-tsei*, or the horse-brigand, who is the veritable highwayman—the most picturesque hunghutzu. He begins single-handed, but as his evil deeds pile up he becomes more and more daring, and his renown spreads far and wide. Recruits flock to the standard of a successful desperado of this type, and as the number of his followers increases he gets more and more reckless, until he finally becomes such a pest by officially "fan" or revolting, that the Government either runs him to ground by instituting a grand battue of troops, or else buys him out of the business with hard cash. If he is really very strong, and living in some distant village surrounded by his followers and difficult of access, the latter course is generally resorted to.

Tseng Ch'i, the Governor-General of Fengtien province, has quite recently recruited two battalions of infantry entirely from so-called hunghutzu by entering into private arrangements with their chiefs, and fifteen months ago I myself witnessed the interesting spectacle of the swearing-in of these formidable and healthy-looking ruffians at Moukden. It is probably this curious recruiting of the Chinese Government which has given rise to the stories that the Russians have themselves enlisted Manchurian bandits. For rifle inspection is sometimes insisted on by Russian post-commandants; and the uninitiated, seeing the Czar's officers in the midst of Chinese troops, have concluded that these hunghutzu recruits are directly under their orders. Such is, however, never the case.

Because Manchuria is little known in Europe, and because travellers gazing at a huge expanse of country through the window-panes of a railway carriage are proverbially gullible and eager to believe, the curious stories of the terrorism in which the hunghutzu held the Manchurian people until the Russians came are swallowed without a moment's hesitation. The hunghutzu is generally a very matter-of-fact person, as I have shown, and prefers to live in peace to being chased from countryside to countryside. In Petuna the district hunghutzu are now the insurance agents of the great Western caravan roads. At Ninguta people laugh at the idea that the hunghutzu can hurt anybody, and say it is all a question of being willing to pay a little money. If there are really hard times and no money to be made by honest work, the Chinaman will undoubtedly prey upon the caravans—but otherwise not. Never have such a peaceful and law-abiding people existed as the Chinese of the North. Nowhere else could you find such quiet as you do in Manchuria to-day, without any policing whatever going on.

But perhaps it is, in a way, only the quiet before the storm. If the storm comes, then beware, Russian soldiers! This time there will be some odd guerrilla fighting on the plains and hills of Manchuria, and in the front ranks will be found our old friend the hunghutzu—hunghutzu no more, but patriot eager to help in the casting off of Muscovite toils that seek to enmesh all—officials, traders, people, and brigands alike.

CHAPTER XXII

NINGUTA AND THE SURROUNDING COUNTRY

NINGUTA, like every other town of importance in Manchuria, and in conformity with the terms of the Chinese Eastern Railway Agreement, lies some distance from the railway. One of the curious stipulations of railway concessionnairing in Manchuria lays down that all towns of importance are to be avoided—on the one hand, so as not to interfere with Chinese prejudice, and on the other, to allow the Russian to build up his own Far East independent of existing settlements. How many miles away Ninguta is from the nearest railway station, I cannot accurately write, because I forgot to ask, but it will suffice to say twenty or thirty li. In any case, it is a good two hours drive by Chinese cart, and the roads are somewhat terrible. In the old-time Manchurian scheme of things, Ninguta was the residence of a Military Deputy-Lieutenant-Governor, one of half-a-dozen Manchu military Commanders in this province of Kirin, who nominally, very nominally, had under his orders a couple of thousand foreign-drilled troops. Of course, of these there is now no trace, for the

Chinese soldier under native auspices is apt to be very much of a fleeting and ephemeral thing, and the native military have never recovered from the shock of 1900.

The military Yamen in Ninguta, which is enclosed by a high stone wall, wears a deserted and forlorn look, somewhat symbolical of China's military impotence in the three Eastern provinces since the Boxer business. Ninguta lies on the left bank of the river Hurka, called by the Chinese the Mu-Tan-chiang, a clear, swift-flowing stream joining the Sungari 160 miles to the north, at the ancient Chinese garrison town of Sansing. The Hurka is very shallow here among the Manchurian highlands, and although it is easily navigable, it is apparently but little used as a highway. Road transport is so cheap and so abundant in this land of ponies and mules, that even water cannot compete with it—truly a remarkable state of affairs. Perhaps, however, it is on account of the fact that the Hurka is a clean stream, with little or no mud in it, that it is so little used by Chinese commerce. For it is noteworthy that native trade always hugs the banks of muddy rivers, and thrives exceedingly where there are many treacherous bars and sandbanks, and where the smells are strong and well-defined.

Ninguta is a very flourishing place, and seems to have been but little harmed by the great Boxer war, and the awful retribution which overtook many other Manchurian towns passed it by. It is hardly

Russian Troops Quartered in a Chinese House on the road to the Yalu.

much more than 100 miles as the crow flies from the true frontier of Russian Prinorsk, and had it not been for the rapidity of the Russian advance up the Sungari from the Amur in 1900, it would have been through Ninguta that invading armies would have come to accomplish the capture of central Manchuria. The town commands the highways to Kirin city, and also to the important frontier post of Hun-ch'un, about which much will be heard if war comes again to this unhappy country. Hun-ch'un was abandoned by the Chinese after some desultory fighting three years ago. From there the Chinese Imperial forces (not the Boxers or Redbeards, mind you) fell back in disorder in the first days of September, 1900, on Ninguta. They had, it appears, attempted, in the usual half-hearted Chinese fashion, to carry out the insane orders transmitted them from far-away Peking during the Prince Tuan summer *régime*—an attempt which cost them several hundred men, and effectively stopped all Chinese official aggression in this part of the world. The Hun-ch'un fugitives arrived in Ninguta with the most horrible tales, and showed their torn and bloody clothing to wondering people, who had not yet begun to understand what all this trouble was really about. Indeed, so alarming were the reports spread about the brutality and carnal lust of the Russian soldiery, that all Ninguta started running towards Kirin city, headed by the Military Deputy-Lieutenant-Governor. However, in spite of this blind terror, nothing much happened to

Ninguta, for the town is, comparatively speaking, unimportant, and this north-eastern part of Manchuria is the Scotland of the country, and is, therefore, not much coveted by anybody, except from a strategical point of view. What the Russians desired was to reach and conquer the rich cities of the plains—say the 500 miles from their leased territory of Kuantung to Harbin, and then east and west on either side for 100 miles or so. This is a land flowing with milk and honey, coveted by all; the rest is mainly unregenerate Manchuria, full of mountains, bad beasts, and a worse climate.

Ninguta is said by the local people to have a population of from thirty to forty thousand inhabitants, but it seems to the eye of a traveller, from a look at its mean streets, that this is an exaggeration. It is likewise accounted by the Russian a hung-hutzu city—that is, a centre from which predatory bands sally forth and raid neighbouring villages and peoples. But, like everything in China, this is one of the misconceptions which have arisen owing to the vagueness with which the Chinese invariably speak of everything demanding an exact knowledge of time and place.

Everybody knows that if you ask a Chinaman where he comes from, he may stolidly answer Hankow or Tientsin, when he is a native of neither of these places. What he means to say, or should say, is that the town he names is the principal city of his country-side or prefecture—the point at which he takes ship or junk—and this is the place from which

he would have you think he comes, on the principle that the greater is the better than the less. Similarly, in Manchuria, although both Petuna and Ninguta are spoken of vaguely as disaffected centres, at which numbers of desperate characters reside, you will have a hard time at unearthing any men who differ one jot from the average peaceful Chinese in either pursuits or appearance. In the mountains which you see on all sides from Ninguta, it may be that there are men outrivalling both the Bashi Bazouks and the Moros in infernal brutalities and untamed natures; but in spite of this they are mainly conspicuous by their absence, no matter where you may look for them. The experiences of missionaries and Englishmen who have travelled much in Manchuria during the last thirty years is, that these unfortunates are by no means as ferocious as they are made out to be, and, indeed, generally leave all Europeans strictly alone.

Ninguta nominally should be garrisoned, I had learnt, by some sotnias of Cossack cavalry, according to the latest distribution of "Russian troops in temporary occupation." Inquiries and journeyings about the town, however, soon showed me that what has occurred in other parts of Manchuria has likewise been seen here. Every available man has been hurried down to Southern Manchuria, and mere skeleton corps left at the less vulnerable or less important places. When I say vulnerable, I mean, of course, less vulnerable at the outbreak of a war with Japan. Ninguta may, therefore, be said

to have no Russian garrison at all. There are a few telegraphists, but that is all. You see, everybody in Manchuria knows about as much concerning the probability of Japanese descents as the Russian headquarters staff, in spite of its vast learning. The main Japanese attack, argue the strategists, would have to come either *viâ* Korea over the Yalu, or by surprise landings somewhere on the Liaotung peninsula. In Northern Manchuria, that is, either south or possibly north of Vladivostock, it is not likely the Japanese would do more than try and make a diversion. All this part of the country is far more wild—far more difficult to negotiate—than Southern Manchuria, and withal only provided with bad roads, so narrow in places that carts must follow one another in single file, and columns of four are entirely out of the question.

The point immediately interesting when one is in Ninguta is, of course, Possiet Bay. Attacking forces landing there would find themselves only a few miles from the Chinese frontier post of Hun-ch'un, and once arrived there, three or four days' march would see them in Ninguta. It is less than two days' steam from Japan's northern island, Hokhaido, to Possiet Bay—and as the main part of the Russian fleet would undoubtedly be round the other side of the Korean boot, the Japanese would have no difficulty in getting a foothold on the mainland here, provided always that they can defeat the Russian on the beach. How much Russians must regret this vast Korean boot of land that juts out so

The Peking Cart—the Cab of the North.

Chinese Troops.

alarmingly, and makes the Primorsk over a thousand miles by sea from Port Arthur and the leased territory, instead of only five hundred, as it would have been if nature had only first consulted St. Petersburg! The Russian, however, much as the little brown men may desire to land at Possiet, has no intention of being kicked off the beach if he can possibly help it. So he has been very busy of late fortifying Possiet, fortifying the hills around Possiet, and also fortifying Chinese Hun-ch'un. In the process, he has moved all the troops he has so far been able to spare from Southern Manchuria, from Ninguta down to the hills facing the sea of Japan. Plainly, Ninguta is not interesting at the present stage of proceedings. If the Japanese were to climb through the country as far as this, the Russian position in North-eastern Manchuria would be a very parlous one. For a considerable portion of the Eastern half of the Trans-Manchurian Railway can be very conveniently cut from Ninguta and rendered perfectly useless; Vladivostock can be threatened from the rear; Harbin placed in awful danger; and forced marching might even find Japanese forces joining hands somewhere in the neighbourhood of Kirin city without the Russian knowing exactly how they had got there. And daring detachments of Japanese soldiery might even float down the Hurka, seize Sansing, and close the Sungari to Russian navigation.

When you are in Ninguta, therefore, you incline to the opinion that after all the Russian may be

willing to evacuate, but that he is truly afraid to do so until Japan is definitely settled with. Continuing this line of thought, the movement of troops going on unceasingly along the railway assumes a purely defensive aspect, and seems in no way aggressive. You may even begin to think that you have been mentally maligning the poor Slav after all; that there is something to be said for his point of view. But when you are giving way to your feelings in this way, it is proper and reasonable to remember that you have already received half-a-dozen conflicting impressions in different parts of Manchuria. For instance, in Harbin you almost thought Russia and Manchuria were synonymous terms, as the Russian pretends he does; in the country away from the railway you have thought the whole thing a myth; when you hear Russians talk you know they are aggressive; when you read his newspaper, published for foreign consumption, you are convinced it is the Japanese who wish to carve the Slav up, and that the Slav is, on the other hand, merely acting in the interests of Europe and civilisation, with no thoughts of personal gain or advantage. So with all these impressions fighting one against the other, it is best to be extremely wary in Manchuria, and merely to observe carefully and make up your mind long afterwards.

Ninguta lies in the very centre of a country which has great interest for the archæologist and the lover of old-time things. Here, in these latitudes, ancient and now forgotten kingdoms have

risen, swayed the country for a while, and then passed away. Two thousand years ago, or even a thousand, this country was peopled by men of a curious mixed race, Tungusian in stock, who built cities and monuments, lived and loved as other men, and are now utterly forgotten. Their descendants are probably the degraded tribes who still are to be found in the extreme North-east part of Kirin province; men who live by the chase alone, and who are a curious survival of those times when European civilisation was undreamed of.

In the Ninguta inn, an old man told me that some twenty miles to the south of the town there were still some curious ruins to be seen, which tradition said had been there many hundreds of years before the Chinese came. These are called locally the old Korean graves, but why or wherefore no one man knows. A hundred years ago or so, the Chinese themselves were only pushing up these valleys of the Hurka, and frightening back the old-world inhabitants. Even fifty years back that curious people, the yu p'i ta tzu, or Fish-skin Tartars, were to be seen all round Sansing, and sometimes higher up the Hurka. Fifteen years ago, when James visited Manchuria and wrote his interesting book, "The Long White Mountain," the Fish-skins had retreated a hundred miles farther north, and only visited Sansing at rare intervals. A native fur dealer assured me at my Ninguta inn that there were now hardly any left south of the Amur. Crushed in between the advancing tides of Russian and

Chinese civilisations, the aboriginal inhabitants of these dreary jungle-covered mountain lands are slowly dying out and will soon cease to exist. The American Indian is not the only picturesque figure which has to be bemoaned by the lover of the romantic. These old-world Tartars, the Fish-skins, clothe themselves almost entirely in the skins of the tamara—a species of salmon—and hence their name. The tamara literally swarms in the Hurka, and everywhere in Ninguta these fish were for sale. The tamara, being bred in the icy waters of the Amur, the Sungari, and the Hurka, has the most wonderful heat-giving properties, if one is to believe the testimony of Father de la Brunière, the valiant missionary apostolic, who in the forties undertook a perilous voyage to the banks of the Amur to convert various long-haired people, or Chang Mao tzu, as the Chinese call them. In those days the Goldi, the Giliaks, and other uncouth tribes filled the country, and life was not as secure as it is now. The reverend father says that a little millet and plenty of dried tamara alone supported him through winters of a continual cold of eighty-three degrees Fahrenheit, or say fifty-one degrees. Sometimes the thermometer even went as low as sixty-five, or nearly one hundred degrees of frost, and yet this poor traveller says he suffered less from the cold than in Southern Liaotung, where the tamara was unobtainable. I myself have eaten a good deal of tamara, but although it was very palatable, I cannot say I suffered from heat apoplexy, even when the thermo-

meter was sixty degrees in the shade. The sturgeon, whose delightful roe duly becomes caviar, was likewise to be found for sale at Ninguta. I was offered one monstrous fish, even at this early season of the year, said by the Chinese to weigh six hundred catties, or nearly eight hundred pounds.

Talking to hunters and others who wander this country in winter, and who were preparing to go out for the season, the extraordinary glamour of the half-known began to exercise its influence on me, and I almost decided to hire a squat-sterned boat and try a voyage down the Hurka to its junction with the Sungari. An enthusiastic native fur-dealer, who was on his way overland to Sansing to buy furs, said he would join me if I would give him a free passage. But my courage sank when I went outside the inn and found a bitter north wind blowing and a freezing leaden sky. Winter was rushing down from the north as fast as it could, and for the next six months the sole aim of one's existence here would be to try and keep warm. So I remembered, before I had definitely compromised myself, that I had a mission. I told the innkeeper to prepare my bill, excused myself as best I could, and made all preparations for an early start the next day. After a very short experience you learn not to linger about Northern Manchuria when the winter is threatening you. It is far better to get home and thank the Lord that you are not condemned to hibernate in mountain lands, where the vile north winds saw one into more pieces than any Chinese *ling-chih*.

CHAPTER XXIII

RUSSIA'S GREAT MANCHURIAN GENERAL, *alias* THE CHINESE EASTERN RAILWAY

THE Chinese Eastern Railway Company (unlimited) is a joint-stock company, whose share capital the Russian Government has, in the press of business, forgotten to issue to the public—fortunately for the public. But stay, I am wrong. For two Grand Dukes, one Prince, and at least half-a-dozen mysterious others have holdings in this brilliant concern, the extent of which no mere outsider may gauge. These holdings exert a mysterious influence in more ways than one, to which I shall have occasion to refer later on. What the nominal capital of the company is, or to put it more frankly, and after all more accurately, what sum of money the Russian Government has advanced to the Russo-Chinese Bank, who are the so-called concessionnaires, to pay for the construction work and for countless other things no living man knows. He may think he knows, and may even be a few millions within the mark, but that is all. No one can possibly know accurately, seeing that many of the railway accounts

were conveniently lost during the Boxer business, that likewise many miles of road had to be partially rebuilt owing to the same cause, that the construction of expensive permanent steel bridges is even now going on, that enormous administration buildings, costing some seven million roubles, are not yet ready or accounted for, that many accounts have not yet been made up, and that, finally, when these accounts are made up, no one exactly knows whether they are to be classed under the heading of railway construction or simply "Empire Building—General Account."

So he who reads may see that the matter is no simple one, and a chartered accountant, under the new Company Act, would probably prefer suicide to giving a clean certificate. Japanese estimates, however—and be it noted that the Japanese are such careful compilers of figures that they would even satisfy an Investors' Wilson—state that up to the 1st of July of this year the Manchurian railways had cost Russia the gross total of 370 million roubles, or, say, nearly forty millions sterling. But there is some reason to believe that the Japanese have overlooked, or not included, certain totals in their estimates—totals, indeed, not available for the ordinary man. I am therefore of the opinion that with Hsing-an tunnelling work, new steel bridge work, new feeder lines, strengthening of the approaches to rivers which have been damaged this summer, uncompleted Dalny terminus works, and other miscellaneous items too tedious to mention, the grand total will reach a far higher figure. I have

discussed this question again and again with non-Russian engineers concerned in the building of the railway, whose names it would be indiscreet to mention, and they, one and all, hover in the neighbourhood of five hundred million roubles. But this total, admitting all the unblushing and unparalleled robbery which has taken place, seems too gigantic to be true, although it includes many things apart from the building of the iron track. There are the railway, sea-going and river-steamer services, the railway barracks, the railway mines, and many other offshoots belonging to the Chinese Eastern Railway Company. I therefore think that it will be best to adopt the total of forty-five millions sterling, or four hundred and thirty million roubles, as the nearest possible one can get to the correct total. What I have to say later on is, therefore, based on the assumption that these Russian railways and their necessary adjuncts will have cost the above sum when they are properly completed.

But although I have in one of my preceding papers dealt with the manner in which the Manchurian railway concessions was obtained from China—*i.e.*, payment in kind for help given to the Peking Government in 1895 in forcing the Japanese to evacuate the Liaotung—to make this account complete I must, even at the risk of wearying the reader, include the various railway agreements under which the world-worrying concessions were obtained.

Apart from the apocryphal Cassini convention, which it is best to ignore, the first document deal-

Train on the Rolling Plains of Central Manchuria.

A Typical Station on the Manchurian Railway.

ing with the Manchurian Railway is the Agreement of September, 1896, entered into between the Chinese Government and the then newly-constituted Russo-Chinese Bank. The general terms of the Agreement are:—1st. Shareholders of the proposed Company to be Russian and Chinese only; 2nd. Gauge to be the Russian gauge of five feet; 3rd. Work to be begun within twelve months after the issue of the Chinese Imperial Edict; 4th. Railway to be completed within six years; 5th, and most important of all, if most improbable, on expiration of eighty years from the completion of the line and the inauguration of the railway as a running concern, the railway and all railway property passes into the hands of the Chinese Government without payment, the Chinese not being responsible for any losses which the Company may have sustained during that period; and in addition to the above, the Chinese Government has the right, on the expiry of thirty-six years, to take over the railway on due payment, such payment to include the actual cost thereof, together with all debts and interest thereon.

The main points in the above, viz., that the railway can be repurchased in thirty-six years' time—that is, in 1939, and in any case passes into the hands of the Chinese Government without payment after eighty years, are worth remembering, because in practically all the now numerous railway concession agreements China has been forced to make, through the good offices of the Russo-Chinese

Bank, these purchase and reversion clauses exist. Regarded from the present position of politics in China, these clauses practically say to the Peking Government: "If you are not rich and strong enough to buy us out in less than forty years, we are going to gobble you up inside of eighty, because if we do not, and commercial honour still obtains in Europe, we will have to lose railways which we have no intention of losing if we can possibly help it." You may laugh at this, but it is no laughing matter for China, and it is of the utmost importance for people at home to finally understand that Manchuria is but an object-lesson of what is going to happen in every other part of China. Downing Street appears to consider these things—if it ever thinks things in China worth serious consideration—remote possibilities, whereas they are very dangerous features in the present situation.

For a period of eighteen months, that is, up to March, 1898, Russia only possessed the right to build what has been called the Trans-Manchurian Railway—that is, the section which runs from a point on the South-Eastern frontier of the Trans-Baikal province to the Western Ussuri frontier of Russian Primorsk, or the Pacific province. I have discussed elsewhere the absolute necessity of this railway running through Chinese territory, and I need here only say that for the Trans-Siberian to run from Stretensk along the northern bank of the Amur, meeting the northern Ussuri railway at Habaravosk, was, if not a physical impossibility,

at least, without doubt, a financial one. An American who has been for twelve years on or around the Amur assured me that there are at least two hundred rivers and marshy stretches which would have to be bridged or built over between Stretensk and Habaravosk, and that no American company would undertake the work under the terrible climatic conditions which prevail for so many months of the year. Although, therefore, most Englishmen are fierce Russophobes they must be prepared to admit that, up to 1898, Russia was quite reasonable in her demands, and was only rendered unreasonable after that date by England's unparalleled weakness, and for no other cause. Even at the risk of wandering away from the point, it is necessary to refer to these things, for they have a great bearing on the whole question.

With the departure of the British men-of-war from Port Arthur in the winter of '97—'98, the now famous leasing agreement was drawn up in Peking by Monsieur Pavlow, and duly signed in March, 1898 (third moon of the twenty-fourth year of Kwang-Hsu). The only article which concerns the question of Manchurian railways is Article VIII. in which China agrees that the procedure sanctioned in 1896, regarding the construction of railways by the Chinese Eastern Railway Co. across Manchuria, be extended, so as to include the construction of a branch line connecting the Trans-Manchurian system with Dalny, Port Arthur, and Newchwang.

From March, 1898, therefore, Russia had the right to invade the whole country with a system of railways designed with one object—that of ultimately robbing China of some of the most magnificent grain-growing districts in the world; and that right was only obtained because the Chinese Government was convinced that England was a negligible quantity in North China and beyond, and that to offer resistance to the Russian was worse than useless.

The Central Manchurian railway has therefore been built, and is nothing more or less than a monument to British diplomatic ineptitude and sloth in China. Permanent officials and others in Downing Street have been so purblind as to imagine that the warm waters of the Yellow Sea are a sufficient recompense for exclusion from the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. Let them wait and see. There is one more important point to be considered in the Russo-Chinese agreements, and then one can turn to something more interesting. By an additional clause, Russia obtained the right to police a strip of territory extending for fifteen versts on either side of the railway line wherever it might go, and also the sole right to exploit any mineral deposits she might find within this strategic area. Previous to 1900 the number of railway guards employed to carry out this nominal policing work was quite reasonable, but the Boxers, somewhat feeble creatures after all in their unorganised state, showed of what little value these

men were by incontinently chasing them away in every direction as soon as the first shot had been fired.

Apart from indulging in man-hunting, the Boxers tore up a good deal of the iron road. It is impossible to say how much destruction was actually done, but it is only fair to acknowledge that considerable portions of the completed track in Fengtien, or the southern province, were badly damaged, and that in the neighbourhood of Harbin, and also of Ninguta, a good deal of wrecking took place. However, if you have enough money, and enough men, you can rebuild railways as fast as they can be torn up. In Manchuria this tearing up has at least had one salutary effect: all the new material used was much better, and much more calculated to withstand the extreme climatic conditions met with, than that which was first used.

The cost of the railway I have already given in the most approximate fashion possible. It is interesting to see whether the line could ever be made to pay the interest on bonds bearing four and a half per cent. interest—the rate of the Siberian railway bonds. The service of a loan of forty-five millions sterling at the above rate of interest would amount to £2,025,000 nett per annum, after deducting all running expenses and costs of administration. Allowing that these costs and administrative expenses were to come to fifty per cent. of the gross receipts, it will be then necessary for this railway of 2,300 versts to earn yearly upwards of

four million sterling to prove, not remunerative but merely solvent. And be it noted that nothing is being allowed in my estimate for a sinking fund to repurchase bonds that must lapse in the eighty years' time-limit. The question, therefore, arises at the very outset as to whether the line can possibly earn a sum equal to forty million roubles a year. At first sight it seems wholly impossible, but a little examination shows a very different state of affairs, always allowing that a man will ultimately be found by the Russian Government who is really competent to undertake such serious work. The most cheeseparing Directorate, however willing to cut down running expenses to practically nothing and subordinate everything to economy, could not hope, for some years to come, to earn *bonâ fide* profits. The interest of two million pounds a year on the bonds would have therefore to be found by the Russian Government itself for at least five years.

But before going any further in my speculations, I would wish to introduce a new point, and it is this. I have given the rough estimate of 2,300 versts as the total length of the lines when completed. The includes the extension, under construction, to Kirin city, the proposed line to Ninguta, and some other small feeders. I cannot, however, regard the Chinese Eastern Railway as a possible commercial success until certain things are done. A double track must be built between Harbin and Port Arthur; Dalny must be abandoned; and the great bean-growing districts

properly supplied with facilities. Although the Trans-Manchurian section from east to west can never do more than pay running expenses, the Central Manchurian section, provided there is a double track all the way from Harbin to Port Arthur, and a treble track between certain points such as Tiehling, Moukden, and Newchwang, could be made to pay so enormously that it would more than make up for the deficit on the other section.

Allowing, therefore, for the sake of argument, that a double track is built from Harbin to Port Arthur, and certain other extensions made, the Chinese Eastern Railway, by that time, would have an approximate length of rail of 3,500 versts. Fifteen thousand roubles gross receipts per verst would bring in a gross income of nearly fifty million roubles a year, and I am emphatically of the opinion that this sum, equivalent to £2,000 per mile per year, is by no means an impossible figure to hope for if commonsense methods were adopted. The railway steamers of both the sea-going and river services should at least be able to run without loss.

But such a wonderful change is not to be hoped for so long as the present spirit prevails. The railway is at the present moment a frightful failure, and to convert it into a brilliant financial success would necessitate the employment of Englishmen—the only men who have been able so far to handle the Chinese with real success in trade and industry.

I have been at some pains to discover what the

monthly receipts of the railway are at present, but my efforts have met with no success whatsoever. Bland astonishment and open wonder have greeted my inquiries, and I have been assured with fervour that the line is merely a strategic one, and that the receipts are simply speculative profits generally gobbled up by some department before their totals are publicly or even privately known. With these things duly considered, you may well ask what is the use of discussing the matter any further. In truth, there is not much use, but still to give people some idea of how things are done in contradistinction to what should be done, I propose to adhere to my plan. To show how commerce is encouraged, the freight rate from Harbin to Port Arthur or Dalny is roughly half a rouble a pood (thirty-six English pounds). A slightly more favourable rate is quoted for Dalny, in the vain hope of inducing trade to go to that doomed place. A half a rouble a pood works out to about three pounds sterling per ton for a five hundred mile haul! Seeing that most of the great winter caravan traffic in Manchuria, employing at the lowest estimate 100,000 long carts, each of a two-ton capacity, is in articles that cannot stand heavy freightage, the reader may judge for himself how much the railway is availed of by Chinese merchants. At the present day it is much cheaper to send by cart over nearly every caravan route in Manchuria than it is by the Chinese Eastern Railway, and, what is more, it is a good deal safer.

But the railway authorities in Harbin are very astute people, and to show their market knowledge they have raised all rates considerably from the first of July last. Their excuse is that they were ordered by the Petersburg Board of Directors to make more money, and this is the method they have adopted.

The present great articles of export from Manchuria are beans and bean products, such as bean-oil, bean-cake, &c., &c. This is collected all through winter at points on the frozen river Liao by carts whilst the roads are hard and easily negotiable. As soon as the river opens in spring, huge fleets of junks convey this produce down to Newchwang—the only foreign trade centre of the country—where it is prepared for shipment. This entire movement is roughly from north to south, and probably exceeds a million tons in four months. It is to be doubted whether the railway can ever quote low enough to capture this great trade, or whether it would spell anything but loss to it if it did. There is no doubt, however, that an English company would try and secure the carrying of a great portion of these articles even if it lost money, because such a policy would be bound to attract great quantities of other cargo, and thus allow losses made in one direction to be recouped in another. Trade in China must be coaxed in a very tender fashion, and must never be frightened. One half a million tons of beans and products of beans are yearly exported from Newchwang, and

this total does not include a vast amount of movement not found in export statistics. A thousand thirty-ton freight cars, worked to their full capacity, and quoted a sensible American produce rate per mile, would undoubtedly take all this trade away from the caravan and river; but the Russian has no brains for such things, and would probably get his line hopelessly blocked or lose half the cargo if he ever managed to secure the carrying of it.

Again, in spite of certain provisional arrangements entered into between the Inspector-General of Chinese Customs and a more or less self-appointed Russian representative, dealing with the opening of a Custom House at Dalny, so far no import duties are collected on imports arriving at either this place or Port Arthur and passing into Manchuria proper; neither are Chinese Customs export duties assessed on native produce leaving the country *viâ* the Kuantung territory. You would therefore think that Chinese dealers, probably the most astute in the world at taking advantage of loopholes, would rush their cargo either out of or into Manchuria, as the case might be, *viâ* Port Arthur or Dalny and save the duties. Not so, however. They know the railway too well, and have probably witnessed the unlading of such seemingly unbreakable things as steel guns, and seen them smashed too often to put much trust in uncivilised hands. Therefore, in spite of every Russian attempt to kill Newchwang to the advantage of Dalny, the Russians have at last been forced to admit that

they have failed absolutely, and see no hope of success even in the dim future. This is one more proof that you cannot drive the Chinaman in trade, and that bad business methods are inevitably ruinous. Then again, take Manchurian exports of the second rank—such as furs, silks, tobacco, and ginseng. All these things can bear a very heavy freight. Has the Russian succeeded in securing any of the carrying of this cargo? Not a bit, for the more valuable the cargo the less it likes to trust itself to the tender care of the Chinese Eastern Railway. From Harbin to Port Arthur you can hang about any of the station freight-rooms by the hour and never see a bale of goods; and if you question the Chinese they laugh and think you mad. Calculated in days, I have probably spent nearly a month in waiting at Manchurian railway stations during the past three years, and I have no delusions on this point.

Turning to imports, you find the one great article is cottons—cloths of coarse fabric which make serviceable clothing for most of Manchuria's lower millions. Now bales of sheetings and shirtings, cased in the toughest hempen covers and gripped together with iron hoops, are not easily hurt. The roughest baggage-smasher in the world would give up any wrecking attempts in disgust, and therefore here is the very article for your Russian railways—something unbreakable and unhurtable. And, think of it, you can get it into the country without import duties if you land at Port Arthur or Dalny. Do

you think the Chinese Eastern Railway carries any of this trade? Hardly a bale, and what is more, never will carry much more than now under the present *régime*.

But the Russian has weird and wonderful ideas. He says it is too soon to talk of general business now, and that he wants to develop his own freight traffic before he takes other people's. In order to encourage the shipment of Hankow teas, *viâ* the overland route, a special minimum rate has been quoted from Dalny, which cuts the Hankow-Odessa steamer rate and is designed to kill the Tientsin-Peking-Kiachta-Urga camel-caravan trade in China brick teas. When in Dalny I took a great deal of trouble to ascertain the manner in which these countless chests of Yangstze teas were being treated, and I was truly thunderstruck. Cargoes that had been unladed weeks before were still choking the godowns, and seeing that winter had already come in Siberia, their rate of progress across the Steppes when they were finally shipped can be imagined; for there is no man in the world who hates to work so much in the cold as your typical Russian. Now, tea is proverbially a quick cargo, just as certain other things are slow cargoes. In the old unregenerate sailing-ship days, the fastest clippers used to proceed to Canton, wait for the first season's crop, load up, and then dash home with every stitch of canvas spread, and with the whole ship praying for more wind. Even to-day, when Anglo-Saxons have largely abandoned the

fragrant China leaf in favour of its strong-tasting Ceylon and Indian rivals, twin-screw mail-steamers are content to make a speciality of picking up cargoes of teas at out-of-the-way places in China. In other words, tea is a valuable cargo, a beautiful and easy one to handle in its square chests, and one which pays mightily. It is, however, casting pearls before swine to give any Russian railway company the handling of it, for they are the most terrible incompetents I have ever seen. Already at Dalny this incipient trade is being rapidly killed by careless methods, and Russian tea merchants from Hankow have assured me that this is the first and last time they dispatch consignments by the great overland route.

Again, Dalny is the second place of importance in the Kuantung leased territory, and therefore the Petersburg Government decreed at first that Russian men, Russian stevedores, and Russian shift-bosses should have charge wherever they could, so that the Russian flag and Russians might be supported and represented by white men and no others. Immediate results—general chaos and anarchy. To-day Cantonese tally-men, the universal tally-men of China, Cantonese shroffs and compradores, officiate everywhere; symbolical of the irresistible superiority of the Chinaman in trade and its management. Shantung coolies are invading all the lower railway grades. Sikh watchmen, likewise the universal watchmen of China, guard the godowns, offices, and storehouses of the Dalny

terminus, and have displaced scores of young Russians and Siberians, who came to the golden East in the expectation of finding the riches of Golconda lying at their feet. The Russian Government is, however, benevolent to its people, and, still desirous of keeping up the fiction that it can ultimately Russianise Manchuria, it retains these disappointed ones in its service, who meanwhile sit around in crowds looking wistfully at an animation and a scheme of things utterly beyond their comprehension. It is really more pathetic than anything else.

What I have written disposes of the all-overland trade to Russia. Now let us see what comes from Russia itself to Manchuria on the much vaunted railway. Briefly put, and disregarding smaller articles, such as sugar and clothing, the traffic may be summed up in one word—vodka. Yes, Exeter Halls and blue ribbon societies of the world, the paying freight from Siberia and Russia has hitherto been vodka, not vodka in mere car loads, but vodka in train loads, in dozens of train loads, mountains of cases, oceans of liquor. All this has been rushed out of Russia in order to escape the new excise duties imposed by M. de Witte, and now lies in huge stacks at the three or four places in Manchuria and the Kuantung territory that have really some Russian people. All have been doing their best during the past year or so to reduce these enormous stores, and it is wonderful what one hundred thousand civilians and soldiers can do when they

really try to lower drinking records. Along the railway any employee who receives a tip from a traveller promptly jumps into the nearest buffet, gets a pint bottle of vodka, slips it into his trousers, and before the shades of night have fallen is gloriously drunk for the sum of eightpence half-penny! With this going on and everybody honestly helping, the consumption has been enormous. For instance, at the Port Arthur station, the great mountain of vodka cases was for months one of the show sights of the town. To-day, instead of being the Himalaya of drinks, these stacks have become mere insignificant table-lands at which Harbin people look with disgust, with the remark that they can do far better in their own little town.

The railway, however, has benefited by this ardent worship of Bacchus, and money, much money, has been made by this blood-firing freight. But it would seem to the ordinary man hardly sound business in a new country, and the average investor cannot see dividends in mere vodka, even after he has consumed a good deal of it for himself. Some sugar also comes from Russia ; likewise candles and butter—that is all.

So under the present *régime* the carrying line is doomed and its failure merely further ostracises everything Russian from the commercial life of the country St. Petersburg wishes to conquer. But if you have been to Port Arthur or Dalny you will say that everybody there complains that the railway is overworked, has in fact no room for anybody's goods and does not want them yet. Exactly, and how

is it overworked? By loading up endless cars with building bricks, timber, and coal for its own use and letting them take root wherever they happen to be. If a Port Arthur or Dalny firm wishes to send a train-load of tinned provisions up to Harbin for the troops and civilians (this is the Russian idea of trade in a great agricultural country), the station master must be approached hat in hand and begged for a couple of dozen cars. No, impossible, he will inevitably answer. Well, will query the merchant, how much? Perhaps he will be asked five hundred roubles, perhaps even a thousand—who knows? So the merchant takes out his pencil and works it out. There is a profit in it still, even with the extra squeeze piled on, for the European importer in Manchuria does not do business under twenty per cent. margin. So the stuff is finally shipped. If you are an extraordinarily lucky dealer you will happen to be in Harbin when that train-load is dumped and the sardine boxes are chasing one another round the station. For then comes what the Yankee terms a soft snap in freights. You see the Harbin station master has got to send back those cars at once empty or full, because if he does not and the Port Arthur man happens to be "inspected" it would be conclusively proved that two dozen cars were missing, and that which is missing is stolen. Logic flourishes exceedingly in Russian Manchuria. So the lucky man at Harbin can hire two dozen unfortunates that have travelled so unwillingly for a mere song and make money. In this way are the sharp rewarded.

Again, the average person, even if he does not happen to be in trade, will agree that this is hardly business ; but it is largely things of this nature which constitute the freight traffic in Manchuria. The Chinaman is an especially keen business man, as all the world knows, so he absolutely refuses to embark in such ventures. However, there are always daring small speculators in every part of China, and Manchuria is no exception to the rule. These have hit upon an ingenious method by which it is said that all are making money. Each man hires his own freight-car for a month, a quarter, or a half-year, and gets a permit allowing this goods-waggon to be coupled on to any heavy train he likes between certain points. Provided therefore with a thirty-ton capacity, this model broker proceeds to beat up cargo from native merchants wherever he can get it. He simply undertakes to load at such and such a station and discharge at the destination without taking any risks. I do not know whether it is merely my market ignorance, but it seems to me that this smacks largely of the irregular, and that an outsider is taking good profits which should rightly belong to the railway company. One native dealer with whom I had a long talk said to me what may be freely translated as follows : " I don't care whether I tell you or not, because I am now on velvet. I have been doing this business for eighteen months and have cleared several thousand taels profit, and I am now getting out of it as fast as I can. The Russians are huai (Anglicé, bad,

corrupt), and I have had enough of them, for they are worse than our own officials in squeeze." He has hit the nail right on the head, this astute Chinaman. The system is rotten to the core and will never have any success until there is a root and branch reform. This is the beginning and end of the Chinese Eastern Railway as a freight-carrying line.

Turning to passengers, the results obtained so far are much better. Everybody knows about the bi-weekly expresses, which start from, and arrive at, Dalny the doomed. Some people declare that the accommodation is bad and that they do not like these trains. Personally, I cannot have any sympathy with such people, for these expresses are much better found than anything in England. The fittings of all the cars are excellent; the panelling most choice, and the sofa-seats excellently upholstered and provided with springs of delicious softness—if anything, too soft for English tastes. The service and the lighting are unexcelled anywhere in Europe, and if you happen to be a first-class passenger you are a king whose every want is anticipated. The restaurant-cars (*wagons-restaurateur*) please everyone, and I personally can vouch for the fact that the *café-au-lait* served in the morning is alone almost as good as a trip to Paris. Nothing brings so home to you that you are on your way to far-off Europe as that coffee. Then each European express has a delightful *chef-de-train*—a real master-of-the-train, whose word is law. He is always a beautiful man in a still more beautiful uniform and a

perfect dream to talk to. My first collision with a *chef-de-train* led me to suppose that I was honoured with a conversation with one of Alexeieff's most trusted generals, although my man had no thick red stripe down his trousers after the manner of Russian generals. He was discussing a bottle of ruby-red wine from the Crimea—No. 16, I think—when I walked into the dining-car. In three minutes I was engaged in an amiable conversation, carried on in perfect French so far as he was concerned. It took me half-an-hour to realise that I was merely dealing with a humble *chef-de-train*—a sort of superior conductor raised to the twentieth power—but even this disillusionment did not spoil him. Among other things he told me he was a Pole, from Warsaw, where I have not been, and he sketched life with the airy Phil May strokes of the *boulevardier* rather than from the point of view of the small Government official. Warsaw, from his accounts, is merely a lively town full of beautiful women longing for handsome men to adore them, a place where even Englishmen would be welcomed.

After finishing his bottle of wine and solving the Manchurian question by awarding the Island of Saghalien to Japan (the suggestion was his), as a *quid pro quo* for the seizure of Manchuria and Korea by Russia, he insisted on my coming to his compartments—apartments I had almost said. I found that he had two rooms provided by the generous state to which he belonged; one labelled private, the other official. As if to accentuate the official character of

his office, the latest Paris boulevard publications lay carelessly on a charming table, on which were also some flowers. Oh! conductors, and master-conductors of England, if there are such things, think of it, naughty books, worse papers, and pretty flowers on the official table of the official compartment of one of your dear *confrères*, who, steaming across Manchuria in state on the European express, proclaims Russia's solidarity in the Extreme East to the traveller, in spite of wars and rumours of wars!

The express passenger trains of the Chinese Eastern Railway are, therefore, as nearly perfect as you can get anything in this world, and I will throw no stone. The only thing I would say is that I would dearly love to scratch my insignificant name on car number four hundred thousand and something—they have got terrifically high in their numbering on the Russian State system—and see how that car had borne a year's handling by Russian trainmen. I think I am not wrong or unjust in supposing that dust, dirt, and carelessness will have won the fight by then, and reduced splendid magnificence to that awful and saddening thing —gentility in reduced circumstances.

The European express trains, however, are only one class. Apart from them there are the daily passenger trains of moderate speed and appearance, which start every afternoon from Port Arthur, Harbin, and the eastern and western frontiers of Manchuria, and which are more worthy of consideration and examination than the through expresses; for they

represent the local life and conditions of Manchuria, in contradistinction to the through service, partly instituted to bluff the unsophisticated traveller into believing in Russia's dominion. These daily trains are usually made up of the first-class carriages, two or three second-class, and at least four third-class carriages. The first-class carriages are good, distinctly good. The second-class would be good if anybody but Russians travelled in them constantly; the third-class are fairly horrid. As might be expected, officers and their wives generally travel second-class, foreigners, merchants, engineers—the railway engineer in Manchuria is a sort of uncrowned king, for he has annexed the majority of the paper roubles floating about—first-class, and the *bourgeoisie* third-class. Here you may study the conditions of the Russian Far East to your heart's content. The first thing you note is that an English manager would either have to reform the passengers' habits or else be prepared to set aside yearly a vast sum for depreciation. For instance, I got into a first-class carriage at Dalny, which had manifestly just left the builder's hands, but in spite of this, it was thick with dust and dirt. Everything that science and modern comfort demand has been attended to with scrupulous care in the building of that car, and the ounce of practice forgotten at the last moment in the haste to conform to the pound of theory. This is seen in every department of life among Russians, as far as I have been able to gather. Not that there is any deficiency in train or

station hands on the railway, for these literally swarm wherever you go. Every first and second-class carriage has its own special car-man, who sits in a little box of a compartment opposite the lavatory all day long, brewing himself endless brews of tea when he can get no vodka. This gentleman is too lazy and dirty for this world, and should be promptly shot into the next, if he got his deserts. If you suggest that his existence should be partly justified by his taking a hand at sweeping out your compartment, he becomes righteously indignant and sulks for hours. Sometimes you even hear him telling his friends afterwards that there is a crazy foreigner inside who will probably want to wash, or do something extraordinary next, unless he is obstructed from the very beginning. To be clean is to transgress the unwritten law of the Russo-Chinese Empire.

The ordinary trains are, therefore, inexpressibly dirty, and, generally speaking, the people who travel in them are rather more so. They have truly filthy habits. Apart from this, the sanitary conditions are often reduced to such a state that mere mention is impossible. In winter everything is tight shut in every carriage, and double windows screwed down, so that there is no possibility of any fresh air getting in, and the result is more easily imagined than described. The atmosphere becomes so foul, so chokingly bad, that life is not only unbearable, but almost impossible for any one who has a white man's lungs. I have been in native

inns in Manchuria where the smoke from the ovens and the kangs was so thick, and the heat so great, even in winter, that Chinese travellers sat stripped to the waist. Well, I am not lying when I say that it was far preferable in those inns to what you are forced to put up with in the average railway carriage in Manchuria, when winter has set its hand upon the land. On one occasion, I had to sit half the night on the outside platform and be nearly frozen to death, in order to escape the disgusting human stench within. These daily passenger trains are well patronised between Port Arthur and Harbin, but the trains coming from the eastern and western frontiers have hardly any passengers at all.

Last and worst of all there are the omnibus trains mainly made up of third and fourth class carriages filled with the lowest class of Chinese workmen. These are nearly always full, for the Chinese fourth class fares are most reasonable and induce a great deal of traffic. Twice I travelled short stretches in these trains—very short I made them—and I have an important suggestion to offer the Harbin railway board. I propose that the Chinese Eastern Railway inaugurates at once international slow races on the principle of those bicycle races in which the prize goes to the man who can travel the slowest without stopping. The Czar might promote general peace and goodwill by putting up a handsome challenge cup, to be retained after three consecutive wins without break-downs. You perhaps think that you have travelled on slow trains

in Europe, but you are sadly deluded. Manchuria is the home of slow trains and the daily omnibus beats creation. If, for instance, you are doing such an indiscreet thing as swallowing a hard-boiled egg, or a prehistoric sardine at one of the wayside stations, and the omnibus starts without warning, do not get flurried and lightly abandon your edibles, for you have ample time to finish all, drink one last vodka, pay your bill, and then catch up the anti-express by walking backwards. You will catch it, never fear, before your digestion is made, and there is really no cause for alarm.

Once, however, I lingered behind with a charming young Russian (an ex-university student from St. Petersburg, sent to Manchuria in disgrace), and we were engaged in so lustily denouncing the Chinese Eastern Railway and all its works, that the company revenged itself by letting the omnibus almost completely disappear from sight. When we went out on the platform the only thing to be seen was a little square box of green colour rapidly, I mean, slowly, retreating down the line miles away. It was obviously an unfair handicap, as the next station was only ten miles away, so we hired a trolley for five roubles from the station master (every station has a trolley or two to let the employees escape from their nightmare, the hunghutzu), and we started sprinting. After exactly twenty-five minutes' easy work, we bumped the omnibus two miles from home, and had to slow down and work the pedals with half a foot for fear

that we would make the train exceed its regulation four miles an hour. Arrived at the next station we promptly opened negotiations for a race—weight for inches as per scale; the train to get a start of half-way towards the next station, and we to be let go on the drop of the danger flag. Everybody got excited, for the Russian is a first-class sportsman, if he only knew how to begin; the crowd cheered and the engine-driver spat on his hands and said he did not mind if he did. Even the station master, when it was explained that there was no squeeze in it, smiled indulgently, and there was every chance of an epoch-making sprint race. Then an official train arrived unexpectedly from somewhere, important officers threw chilling glances on unimportant civilians, my Russian friends froze visibly, and the combat was completely off.

This is, however, the lighter side of the Chinese Eastern Railway, and however amusing it may be, it does not lessen the gloom which envelops the line as a business undertaking. In the earlier part of this, I have referred pointedly to the few privileged shareholders of the Manchurian railway —two Grand Dukes, one Prince, and half-a-dozen others, I think I said. Whilst in Manchuria I was always trying to discover the trail of the serpent—trying to see what special privileges these shareholders reaped by being shareholders and getting no dividends. A lot of investigation unearthed two valuable finds, two really great privileges, although some people might be slow in discovering where the

privileges came in at all. These two privileges are first, timber-felling concessions, and secondly, the right to present pass-keys to one's friends and relatives. Let us take the lesser first and explain.

Every compartment of a Russian railway carriage is locked by a square-holed key, a *carré*, they call it in France. The ordinary traveller, when he boards a train, has to call a man, who, in consideration of a rouble note if he is modest, unlocks the gate and lets you in. Up till that moment you have only bought a ticket and are merely a prospective traveller. But see the potent privilege you possess if you are armed with that open sesame, a *carré*. You can then afford to sneer at guards, conductors, and even *chefs-de-train*, for you move in a plane above them. At Harbin, at Kongchulin, and elsewhere, I noticed highly-civilised Russians—that is, men with clean faces, clean clothes, and beautiful whiskers—letting themselves into compartments to which I had in vain sought admittance. I wondered exceedingly. Conductors and guards passed through the car-corridors, looked and marvelled at the unlocked doors, asked a question, and then retired in confusion, hat in hand. It was the wonderful *carré*, nothing more or less, casting its spell over railway doors and railway guards alike, and I determined to solve the mystery, or die gallantly in the attempt.

At first all my inquiries were in vain ; but finally, after weeks, I met an amiable man who drew the mystic key from his pocket and told me all. Apparently, unless he was lying, which is not improbable,

the thing happens this way: If you are truly favoured, and are about to leave for the Golden East, your high-born shareholder in Petersburg gives you the farewell kiss of friendship, draws you once more to his manly bosom, and then thrusts the *carré* into your hand—a final expression of his intense regard for you. It is the climax of railway and other friendships, and the man who has this pass-key is henceforth marked above his fellows; the shareholder who has conferred this token of honour on him is likewise as happy as if he had received a fifty per cent. interim dividend; and finally the Chinese Eastern Railway is satisfied that it is repaying the investment of capital. Now, for the second privilege—the timber-felling and mining concessions.

People have heard of the little Russian venture on the Yalu, in search of timber, of course, which has caused such a flutter in diplomatic dovecots. Well, the search for lumber has not been confined to the Yalu, but is going on all over those districts in Kirin, or the central Manchurian province, which do not lie too far from the railway. Manchuria has practically inexhaustible stocks of splendid timber in the eastern or mountainous parts of the country. Kirin city is called by the Chinese "Ch'uan Chang," or the dockyard, to accentuate the fact that it lies in the centre of a country with admirable junk-building woods, and therefore builds most of the craft which navigate Manchuria's inland waters. The timber is floated down the River Sungari almost for nothing to

Kirin city, and is a splendid source of income. The Russian always looks with envious eyes on timber, because, if there is one thing he can do it is to fell trees. Your peasant Russian is strong and burly, and axe-swinging does not unduly strain his brain. So, everywhere, privileged Russians, working through the agency of the Chinese Eastern Railway and the Russo-Chinese Bank, have been trying to force the Chinese provincial authorities to give them the right to fell timber. Some people say that many permits have been actually obtained, lacking the Chinese Imperial Seal, it is true, but still permits of a sort. Others again say that no permits at all have been obtained, and that it is all part of the great game of Russian bluff proceeding so calmly in Manchuria, even in the face of the rising storm. However, permits or no permits, the privileged ones have commenced a little private timber-felling in certain places, such as Ninguta, and trees are falling by the thousand.

The part that concerns the Chinese Eastern Railway is that the two privileged Grand Dukes are the proud possessors of what has been derisively nicknamed the Grand Dukes' concession, about which I have spoken elsewhere. This concession, said to cover several tens of thousands of square miles of magnificent wooded country, reputed also full of rich minerals, stretches over half the Eastern section of Kirin province. The grand ducal shareholders have the right to mine and fell timber wherever they like within this enormous area,—at least they

say they have—and their agents have therefore began slogging down trees and getting them carried on the railway for nothing. The principle which these agents work on and their line of reasoning are these. Trees are more tangible and more negotiable than gold-mines; therefore we begin with trees. Our masters are shareholders of the Chinese Eastern Railway, so we pay no freight. First we cut down the trees; then we dig up the roots; and, finally, at our feet will be disclosed the riches of the country—the beautiful red Chinese gold of the golden East—sticking on to the roots and only needing to be picked off by hand!

The average common-sense man will refuse to believe these things, but, although of course treated with poetic licence, this is approximately the sort of reasoning and the style of argument you will hear any day of the week in Manchuria. Never in the world's history have there been such well-educated fools living in such a fools' paradise. So the privileged shareholders, although they will probably never see any dividends or get any interest on their money, at least obtain what they are generous enough to regard as the equivalent of loot bonds. Some timber therefore, not imported from the State of Oregon, is actually moving to and fro uneasily on the Chinese Eastern Railway, and that timber represents the ambulating dividends of the privileged few. I have spoken of Harbin flour elsewhere, and you will ask why it is not also moving. Well, for a variety of reasons, but chiefly because it is as cheap,

and possibly cheaper, to import American flour from the middle west of the United States—flour, by the bye, that has to travel a good deal on American railways, cross five thousand miles of ocean, and be subjected to various squeezes before it finally reaches the consumers' hands in Manchuria. Harbin flour cannot be moved away from its factories simply because of the prohibitive railway rates ruling. And then, you see, Harbin millers, or the men who have put up the money to start the mills, are mainly respectable Hebrews ; and Hebrews are born into the Russian world merely to be bled and be imposed on, and can expect no most-favoured treatment for their wares.

It will be seen, therefore, that from every point of view the railway is not only a commercial failure at the present moment, but that it will continue to be one in the future unless something very extraordinary happens. Instead of attempting from the very beginning to identify itself with the country through which it runs, it has haughtily acted on the principle that the Russian is sufficient unto himself, and that the Chinaman can be successfully snubbed. The hundred years' experience of Englishmen in China, who, in spite of their Government, have succeeded far more than any other nationality, proves conclusively that not only must the Chinese be considered in all commercial and economical matters, but their wishes and inclinations in the end carry all before them and win the day. It is useless for Russian apologists to say that the railway has

only been ready a few months, and that it is too soon to speak. Complete sections have been quite ready for at least one year, and in some cases, for nearly two years. The Belgian Hankow-Peking trunk railway, still only half-built, has been carrying great quantities of native produce for many months past. What the Belgian can do, the Russian can also do, although neither nationality really understands the handling of the Chinaman. Again the idea that the railway is going to build up a new Manchuria, peopled with white Russians and carrying on a white man's trade entirely separate from the twenty million Chinese in the country, is the idea of a maniac who has no conception of what the Far East really is.

For a brief period, say during the year 1901, whilst the terrors of Cossack swords and Siberian noyades were so recent that the Chinese hid themselves as much as possible, the Russian trader, the Russian merchant, and the Russian petty dealer had some slight measure of success along the railway and in the few railway towns. But even in 1902 the position of these people was becoming weekly more precarious; for Chinese dealers were beginning to return and start that fierce competition and underselling which is the nightmare of white Australia, and these Chinese dealers were fired with the patriotic idea of winning back in peace all they had lost in war. A Government, no matter how benevolent it may be to its own people, cannot indefinitely do some things—for instance, buy from its

own people for one hundred roubles what it can get from a Chinaman for sixty dollars. All through 1902 the position of the commercial Russian was precarious, very precarious; in 1903 it is worse than precarious, it is hopeless—quite hopeless; and by 1904, war or no war, the joyous emigrants (why common-place traders are called emigrants I do not know) who rushed into the country two short years ago with frenzied cries of delight at the prize they thought the Little Father had captured for them, will every one of them be packing their traps and trooping out of the country sadder and poorer men.

Therefore not only has the railway failed to attract Manchurian produce and goods—that is purely local trade—but it has ignominiously failed in its self-appointed task of promoting a purely Russian trade running through the country and bringing in its train thousands and tens of thousands of young Russians who would settle everywhere and completely Russianise the three eastern provinces in time. I have already treated the question of traffic so fully—in a somewhat flippant spirit, it is true, but the spectacle is certainly mirth-provoking—that I cannot return to it again. I have merely to say that in a wonderful agricultural region like Manchuria the great source of income of a railway can only be agricultural produce, and unless that trade is captured the railway might as well be torn up again.

The only slightly favourable feature is the passenger traffic, but even that, on analysis, can give but

little satisfaction to sound business men. The passenger traffic, both European and native, is the indirect outcome of an abnormal Government expenditure which simply cannot continue and is even now gradually ceasing. The European expresses I leave out of the question, for they have really nothing to do with Manchuria. But, turning to the hundreds of Europeans who daily travel between Port Arthur and Harbin and other points on the line—who are they all? Officers, officers' wives and families, officers' sweethearts, officers' servants; "emigrants," expending their last roubles in a last attempt to find something to do; ladies of moderate virtue; ladies of no virtue at all; a few *bonâ fide* dealers, merchants, and their clerks; great numbers of Government servants, and, finally, many nondescripts. Who are the majority of the Chinese third and fourth class passengers? Carpenters, bricklayers, blacksmiths, platelayers, artisans, and coolies, either going to seek employment from the Russian Government, or returning home, their terms of engagement completed. If not actually in the employ of the Russian Government, these men are engaged on works or buildings which are the direct result of Government expenditure. The reader may marvel, but even to-day scarcely any decent private Chinese will use the Russian railway, and certainly never when they have their womankind with them.

Officials prefer to take three days on the road in Peking cart from Moukden to Newchwang, to passing twelve hours in a railway carrriage, where

they may be subjected, if not to brutalities, at least to insults. Chinese merchants and their clerks likewise follow their goods on the road and jibe at the iron track. Not that they do not like railway travelling, for that they do can be seen any day of the week in other parts of China : it is simply that well-to-do natives hate and despise the Russians and will have nothing to do with them. Even from Kirin city, which is over three hundred miles from Newchwang, you will hear the same story, and see rich men on the roads in Chinese carts. At the stations the language the Chinese apply to men who call themselves their captors is simply appalling and beggars description. There is hardly any Russian in Manchuria who knows any Chinese at all, so the native can proceed to liken every one of them unto the spawn of tortoises, the chance product of defiled mothers, and many other horrible things. What a state of affairs for people with an Oriental destiny!

It is now my task to destroy the fiction of the booming and thriving newly-created railway towns of which Europe has lately been told so much. The Chinese Eastern Railway in its original scheme of conquest, laid down previous to 1900, included the building of ninety-three stations in Manchuria—ninety-three stations which were to blossom into ninety-three towns, peopled only by white Russians and with no Chinese near them. To-day there are over one hundred stations, for new ones not originally contemplated have been built, and of this

number exactly six have to a very slight extent justified the great expectations of empire-builders who do not know how to build.

Taking them from south to north, I will proceed to discuss them in detail. Crossing the frontier of the Kuantung leased territory at Pulantien, there is nothing to be seen for nearly one hundred miles—that is, until Ta-shih-ch'iao is reached. Ta-shih-ch'iao is the junction from whence the branch line to Newchwang runs, and it is a point of great strategic importance, for Newchwang is only eighteen miles away. At Newchwang there is the river Liao, and up that river can come thousands of Japanese, who in a single night's march could slip across the country to the junction, and steal the key of the railway to the leased territory. Consequently big barracks have been built at Ta-shih-ch'iao, huge engine-sheds have been erected, repair shops, machine shops, depots of stores of all sorts have sprung up, and many other things have been attended to of a military and strategic value. All this necessitates numbers of Russian civilians, apart from the formidable garrison of soldiers—men such as spare engine-drivers, machine-shop men, mechanics of every kind, people to feed these, &c., &c. The Russian civilian very rightly likes his own women, so he has brought his wives to Ta-shih-ch'iao; the wives their children, friends, and relatives; and this multiplication process has gone on indefinitely, until Ta-shih-ch'iao may actually be called a Russian town. It is, however, one of those anomalous

creations which in peaceful times has really no reason for existing, and so, as the present crisis is going to be solved by either real peace or real war, Ta-shih-ch'iao will very shortly be remembered only as a passing and ephemeral expression of Russia's Eastern destiny.

Turning to the railway again, the conscientious man will have a hard tussle in deciding whether there is really any Russian settlement until you reach Harbin, several hundred miles to the north. At Liaoyang there are some Russians who are not wearing a uniform, but they are so ostensibly army-sutlers engaged in feeding the several thousand troops Russia has massed there in preparation for the Japanese attack, that you cannot call them a town without a considerable effort. We will therefore pass Liaoyang by. Going on, we come to Moukden. Well, I can give the exact tally of Russians in Moukden. Apart from the officials and their accompanying Cossacks, there are two storekeepers, one innkeeper, and a dozen nondescripts. Seeing that these are living in the midst of a couple of hundred thousand Chinese and Manchus, it is a matter of opinion whether they can be called a satisfactory Russian settlement or not. Personally, I should say they were not even a hamlet. Then we pass Tiehling, K'ai-yüan, K'uan-ch'êng-tzu, all of them big and important Chinese towns, but few Russians about. You see the railway passes all these places from one mile to five miles away, and the idea was that round the station beautiful places

would grow up entirely separate from ancient Chinese cities, full of white men and women buying and selling. What has happened, however, is that no one except the Government has had any spare money to build houses with, or that no one believes sufficiently in Russia's stability in Manchuria to be willing to sink money permanently in this way, and so the nondescripts are very glad to be able to go into the Chinese towns and live on their neighbours the natives.

Crossing the Sungari the first time—it sweeps from west to east eighty miles south of Harbin on its way to Kirin city—you will see a heterogeneous mass of brick and wooden shanties on the left bank of the river, which represent a Russian town. Rafts of timber, sent floating down the river Sungari by the ducal and other agents I have spoken of before, are broken up here and put on the railway, so some poverty-stricken Russian buildings can really be seen. This is manifestly a town, so let us make it so. Finally we come to Harbin.

Harbin is certainly a place with an unparalleled mushroom growth, and although I do not love it, this does not interfere with it having a big population, as populations go in the Far East, and therefore it has to some extent justified expectations. Briefly put, I would say that in the whole of Manchuria proper—excluding, of course, the leased territory—Harbin is the only place that has any importance or real significance from the Russian point of view; and I predict a financial

panic in Harbin within a very short time, for everything has been done with borrowed money, and there is no ready cash in the place.

The most important part of the railway—that is, the central Manchurian section—has now been dealt with, and so far we have only discovered one really Russian town, Harbin; one junction town, Ta-shih-ch'iao; and the unnamed lumber village on the left bank of the upper Sungari. Whether these represent a complete russification of an area of some one hundred thousand square miles, containing, say, three-fourths of Manchuria's twenty million inhabitants, I leave for the gentle reader to decide. Personally, I cannot see, even in the dim future, those countless pigtails shorn off, or the amiable home life of the Russian Far East adopted as a higher civilisation by the somewhat stubborn native of these parts. But the examination of the complete line is not yet finished, so we will proceed.

Going west from Harbin on the road to Holy Russia, there are no definite symptoms of russification until the Nonni. Across the Nonni, and to the west of the provincial capital Tsitsihar, there is a place which the Russian has called Fu-li-ahde or Fuljardi. He means Fu-liao-tien or the "fodder markets"; at least, that is what the Chinese call the group of native villages near which the model Russian town has been founded. Fu-liao-tien has been referred to again and again in the Far Eastern Press as the "mysterious city," about which no one

may learn the exact details. A little investigation, however, has a shattering effect on the mystery. Fu-liao-tien or Fu-li-ahde, call it whichever you like, is simply a collection of badly-built Russian and Siberiak houses, erected chiefly to accommodate railway guards in the course of training, and sick men, of whom there are always terrible quantities in the Russian army, and is surrounded by some earthworks of no importance, originally intended to guard the poor Russian against his dread enemy, the hunghutzu. Apart from the soldiers, there are some "emigrants," of course, but these would perish were it not for the troops, on whom they perpetually sponge. Some people say that there are several thousand railway guards in training at this place, but, if so, there can be no doubt that the Russian packs far more neatly than the sardine of Nantes.

A few dozen miles further to the west of Fu-liao-tien are the Hsing-an mountains, too frigid even for Siberian settlers. Beyond these mountains there is a two-hundred-mile stretch of country which, although lying actually within the boundaries of Hei-lung-chiang province, is much more Mongolian than Manchurian in appearance. In these dreary wastes there have never been many Chinese settlers, and the few that of recent years found their way so far away from Chinese civilisation were either wiped out by the brutalities of 1900, or disappeared in the mysterious way the Chinaman always disappears when there is trouble in the air. At the

best of times it is a wild land, and, compared to real Manchuria, has but little value. Mr. Wirt Gerrare, who is an authority on Russian expansion, says that Russian squatters are settling here in great numbers. This is very surprising to me, but Mr. Wirt Gerrare writes of 1901. In 1903, I can only say that if he can produce one thousand Russians, not connected with the railway, between the Hsing-an mountains and the Argun, he is a magician who should be cultivated by the Russian Government.

Going on still farther afield we come to Khailar. Khailar used to be a Chinese frontier or semi-frontier town of some little importance in pre-Boxer days. Now it is occupied by a few Russians, who do not appear very happy, but that is all. Khailar, however, lies 100 miles from the frontier of Trans-Baikal province, but even right up to the true Russian boundary line there are scant evidences of the wonderful emigration about which everyone is told. Even if there were huge Russian towns here, it would not affect the great question of Manchuria proper. These waste lands 'twixt the Trans-Baikal and the Hei-lung-chiang province cover an immense area, into which you could bundle a dozen Switzerlands and lose them without noticing it. For hundreds of years past, in fact probably for all time, the only inhabitants have been wandering Mongols and their herds, and so it does not very much matter who the settlers of the twentieth century are. Indeed, west of the Hsing-an might

be openly ceded to the Russian with small loss to China.

Coming back to Harbin again, and going east to the Ussuri frontier, what do we find? Two trifling settlements: Imempo, half-way between Harbin and Ninguta, and Modashi, the nearest station to Ninguta. Modashi has some excuse for living; Imempo none. Modashi under an English *régime* could become great as a lumber centre. Under the control of the Russian, it has every appearance of even now dying a natural death. Mr. Wirt Gerrare in his book says he met a Russian brewer on his way to Imempo, where he was going to start a brewery. Start a brewery! Heavens! the people cannot yet feed themselves except by means of Government subsidies, much less brew drinkable beer!

I have, therefore, finished my catalogue, and present it with much diffidence for the inspection of the Chinese Eastern Railway and the Petersburg empire-builders.

Ta-shih-ch'iao, the unnamed Sungari lumber station, Harbin, Fu-li-ahde, Imempo, and Modashi, there you have the six important places which are held to have justified the expenditure of five hundred millions of roubles in the great and august work of russification. For these trifling results, and because she is ashamed to acknowledge herself economically defeated, Russia is imperilling the peace of the Far East, and daring Japan to attack her! So is history made. However, before the

death-blow is given, I should like an indulgent public to ponder over the permanent staff of the railway in Manchuria.

In every station on the line there are to be found the following Russian officials: one station-master, two or three telegraphists, one or two ticket-office men, one freight clerk, several signalmen, a number of extra hands to provide for emergencies, and anywhere from one dozen to a couple of hundred of green and black railway guards. Including railway guards, it may be said that the minimum number of Russians found in any Manchurian railway station is twenty able-bodied men, and that the maximum is several hundreds. When it is remembered that there are nearly one hundred stations, it can be seen what an enormous expenditure is entered into without a thought of whether it can ever be justified by the railway receipts. On the Imperial Chinese railways—that is, the Peking-Tientsin-Shanghaikwan-Newchwang line, a line financed and practically controlled by British subjects—a few dozen Englishmen effectively work five hundred miles of track.

But the Russian does not remain content with merely having such formidable numbers of his own people in his employ on Chinese soil. He realises that they must be seen, and seen a good deal, if his game is to be successfully played. So, when a European express arrives at any station, a bell clangs loudly, everybody runs out, animation succeeds the usual dull round of railway life:—Officials march up and down the platform, their

hands full of papers of imaginary importance; men rush in through one door and spring out of another; the station-master looks vastly and most distressingly occupied; employees fling their hands up to heaven as if invoking the help of the deities to assist them in their work; railway guards parade with violent insistence up and down the gravelled walks, and expose their medalled breasts—souvenirs of the brilliant campaign of 1900—to the admiring eyes of the traveller. Chinese pedlars, standing at the outer rails, start singing their wares in pidgin Russian—"'Vinograda,' grapes, grapes for sale," is the most commonly heard. Beggars piteously shout in a strange medley of Russo-Chinese, "Shangkao-kopitan-kouss-kouss-niet" ("Be generous, almighty captain, I have no food"). All contribute to the general *mise-en-scène*, and all are truly happy. It is their daily work, and only he who has suffered the *ennui* of being stranded at a wayside station can appreciate what joy this well-rehearsed comedy brings to every one of the Chinese Eastern Railway's many employees. To me it is a perpetual treat to arrive with the European express. No Drury Lane pantomime ever conceived could parade its supers with such effect as the Manchurian Railway. No Irving could manage his stage effects so cunningly. It is all immense, and you have only to keep your ears open to hear the immediate success. On all sides travellers are properly impressed. The Englishman mutters, "Pretty Russian, this

place; even the Chinese speak the lingo," and looks gloomily about him. The Frenchman enthusiastically exclaims, "Oh, c'est bien la Russie ça, allez," and thinks gratefully of his financial alliance. As for the German, he sighs heavily and says impressively, "Dass sollen wir eigentlich bei uns in Kiaochow und Shantung machen," and then curses all the Herr Bebels and socialists ever born, who by refusing to understand world-policies hinder imperialistic expenditures.

And in this fashion the traveller unwittingly lends his aid in the prosecution of that impossible work, the cementing of the Trans-Amur and its myriads of hard-headed yellow-brown men on to the new Siberia filled with Siberiaks, and young Russians dreaming of rich red gold, rapid fortune-making, and Utopia, and bereft of all market knowledge.

Russia in Manchuria is therefore represented all along the railway by these little blobs of station life that have done such splendid work—little blobs separated from each other by twenty versts of tilled fields, and populous villages which have no more in common with the Slav than had the Cossack settlements on the Ussuri River with their Chinese neighbours on the other bank, in the old days before the great invasion of Chinese territory took place.

Station officials and railway guards must be housed well to show their proper importance, and so the amount of brick, stone, and mortar that has

gone up is terrific. Some stations in addition have big barracks; where there are big barracks, officers must have big houses; and when officers have big houses they must bring big wives to fill them properly. And so all the larger stations actually have the appearance of towns filled with officials, connected every one of them directly or indirectly with the railway. It is generally assumed in Manchuria that the Corps of Railway Guards numbers about twenty thousand officers and men—twenty thousand officers and men all drawing double pay, and all paraded almost daily to relieve the tedium of the kind traveller patronising the works of the empire-builder. Has ever the world seen such a spectacle! How many railway servants proper there are in Manchuria, no one knows. Some say three are four thousand Russian employees, some five thousand, to run fifteen hundred miles of railway in an Eastern country. Any Englishman would undertake to make a financial success of the whole vast system with a hundred of his own nationality and a few thousand cheap Chinese.

Turning now to the construction of the railway. Much has been written and more said about the robbery and corruption of the engineering staff, and from this the average man would conclude that the track is uniformly bad. It is not, however, and the main fault is that the finishing off is bad. The first great mistake, of course, was made with the weight of the rails. These are only 64 lbs. per yard, and should be, I believe, 92 lbs., to be capable of resisting

the huge train-weights of the five-foot gauge. The sleepers, originally of indifferent Japanese timber, have been largely changed and are now fairly satisfactory, but slipshod Russian methods are to be observed in the spacing and spiking work. The ballasting is good in some places, indifferent in others, and vile in the far north ; all of which shows laxity of control from headquarters. The new bridge work is excellent and could pass almost any standard. Especially noticeable are the solid piers of masonry on which the steel spans rest. An Austrian engineer who examined a number of bridges said that these piers were well-nigh perfect in construction and design. The new rolling stock is likewise well-built, and the immense Russian locomotives (weight one hundred tons, I believe) have a finished and solid appearance, which testifies to the good workmanship of the Baltic provinces. The original compound Baldwin locomotives built in Philadelphia, which held the field for several years, pending the completion of the line connecting with Siberia and the introduction of Russian engines, are pronounced complete failures by the Russian authorities. Some of them after two years' service are quite unable and literally live in the repair shops. The chief complaint is that they are built too light, and that the finish is very lamentable. Whether this is merely another way of saying that the Slav is very heavy-handed and cannot touch delicate machinery I do not know, but it is only right to say that the Japanese have found the same thing with

their American engines. English locomotive-builders should note this.

The sidings and the shunting arrangements at all the Manchurian stations are very noticeable. In most stations there is ample room for at least a dozen trains to pull up without interfering in the least with the through traffic. The entraining and detraining for any movement of troops can therefore be carried out as expeditiously as possible, and large bodies of men can be housed in railway vans for hundreds of yards along the line at each station, without incommoding a station master's traffic arrangements in the slightest. For instance, at Liao-yang, Hai-ch'êng, and other places commanding the highways from Korea, thousands of troops are billeted on the line in semi-permanent camps of covered vans. These may stay there all through the winter, I am told, and stoves are being fitted to each van. A year ago nearly all the second and third class carriages in Manchuria were ostensibly built for military use. All were covered with steel sheets of sufficient thickness to render them bullet-proof. The windows could be closed by ingenious arrangement with covers of the same material. Three tiers of bunks were available in each car, and sixty men could be comfortably accommodated without crowding. Rifle racks and ammunition wells were openly provided, fitted to each car. To-day all these carriages, however, have disappeared from Manchuria and are to be found in the Trans-Baikal, waiting the solution of the crisis. If war comes

they will be the means of pouring troops into the country, and will provide patrol trains which are to pass half-hourly up and down the line on the southern section of the Central Manchurian line.

The station buildings themselves are solid in structure, bad in finish, but eminently fitted to withstand the rigorous winter. Huge Russian stoves half fill every room and the winter atmosphere may be said without malice aforethought to be able to kill an ox. The woodwork of all these Russian buildings is deplorable, the painting worse, and the fittings unmentionable. Each fourth or fifth station along the lines has a buffet where edibles and drinkables may be obtained at almost any hour of the day or night. The food is varied, very varied, and it is wisest to stick to such single-minded things as the excellent thick soups, the good clean bread, and the very hard hard-boiled eggs. Your Russian is a funny eater at times. For instance, at one station I saw a man spreading raspberry jam on hard-boiled eggs ; at another a woman putting sardines in her soup.

The actual amount of rolling-stock on the Manchurian railways cannot be ascertained, but there is no doubt about one thing—the very large number of locomotives available. Roughly calculating from personal observations, I should say there were from three to four hundred engines in Manchuria. At Dalny, Ta-shih-ch'iao, K'uan-ch'êng-tzu, and Harbin there are literally scores of reserve engines in the sheds, and the number of trains arriving and leaving

THE OTHER MANCHURIAN RAILWAY—TERMINUS OF THE TIENTSIN-NEWCHWANG, ON THE LEFT BANK OF THE LIAO.

OUTSIDE A KIRIN LUMBER-YARD.

Harbin sometimes amounts to thirty per diem. A rapid movement of troops should therefore be possible, and the South Africa deficiency in hauling power not seen in Manchuria. Watch-towers of solid stone with narrow loop-holes have been begun in some places and very little alteration would turn most of the station buildings into admirable block-houses.

I have completed my remarks on Russia's best general in this disputed Far East, and he who reads may judge whether the official copper-plated scheme of conquest has been attended with any measure of success or not, and whether the railway is a Kitchener organisation. The picture I have drawn is an absolutely truthful one, for Manchuria is more familiar to me than the Strand of London. Travellers who have no knowledge of the real Far East are responsible for the absurd tales which I every day read in the home Press—the tales which tell of Russianised Manchuria—of the close friendship between Slav and Chinaman—of the identification of Russian with Yellow interests. It is all a myth, I say once more—a bubble. . . . . Japan may after all burst the bubble.

CHAPTER XXIV

ADVENTURES ON THE ROAD TO KIRIN

THE journey from Ninguta to Modashi, the name of the nearest railway station, was soon accomplished, and once more I was engaged in the weary work of waiting for a train. So far in all my travels during the great crisis I had only met with curiosity from the railway people, sometimes tinctured with a little thinly-veiled insolence at the hands of over-zealous Russian officials, but that was all. A year ago one was treated with no such courtesy. On every occasion one's passport was demanded and difficulties made whenever possible. But now every Russian is secretly wondering whether his Government has not after all gone too far, and is meditating on the possibilities of war. Even at this hour, however, when evacuation should have allowed the country to resume its normal condition if solemn pledges had not been broken, it was noticeable that as I progressed farther towards the eastern and western frontiers—that is, nearer to where the Russian really belongs—a more aggressive attitude was assumed, showing plainly that although the proximity of the

sea in the southern province tends to cool the Russian's self-reliance, once he is on his way back to what he terms "his inaccessible interior," he is inclined to cast politeness and discretion to the winds.

Modashi is comparatively close to the Primorsk frontier, as distances go in Manchuria, and is poorly garrisoned by some wretched Buriat cavalry—Cossacks they call themselves, although they have no right to the name. Perhaps these things account for the fact that the inhabitants of that thriving railway settlement, mainly engaged in the profitable task of removing the Chinaman's lumber without authorisation, are less civil than the Russians one occasionally meets farther south.

As I entered the station I had a feeling that I was not going to receive an honoured guest's welcome, and events shortly proved that I was right. The trouble began at the buffet. I asked the Chinese boy, who officiated there in company with two very dirty Russian women, for something to eat. This amiable servant, who looked curiously oppressed by an inordinate collection of dirt on his person, promptly answered me with the utmost insolence, so I told him in the vernacular that if he would come outside I would do myself the pleasure of throttling him. This is the usual gentle way of replying in Manchuria. As he continued to talk back and refused my invitation to adjourn to the open air I informed him that I proposed to open fire on him with my revolver. This was somewhat of a

stomacher ; for everyone in Manchuria has seen so much unprovoked shooting during the past three years that it has got to be looked upon as a quick solution for momentary difficulties. My long and dirty sheep-skin coat and big fur cap also tended to make me look in every way an undesirable individual, and so my Chinaman did a considerable amount of thinking before he got hold of the right answer. When it finally came I was already engaged in eating, so I paid no more attention, at least, I said he would have to wait. But the boyka's ire was raised, for he had been utterly spoiled by two years' familiarity with lower-class Russians, and had far too keen a sense of his own importance.

Not being able to draw me, and oppressed with a terrible feeling of lost face, the youthful fire-eater went out and complained officially to the station master that an Englishman inside, who was a spy, had threatened to shoot him. If you speak Chinese in Manchuria you are immediately recognised as an Englishman ; and, similarly, if you are rude you are set down as a spy ! Of course, my denouncement created a commotion, and a mixed crowd of long-booted men and women with kerchiefed heads came and stared at me whilst I was engaged in the interesting task of eating the endless line of hard-boiled eggs I had previously annexed. Then the station master arrived in company with a Cossack officer and demanded my passport. I merely ignored him and refused to answer. Bluff must be met by bluff in Manchuria, and the rudest man always wins. I

was again spoken to and again refused to answer with a shake of my head. Things were evidently taking an unlooked-for development, for Russian politeness was soon succeeded by manifest Russian rage and a considerable stamping of top-booted feet. I determined to remain undisturbed and utterly impassive, and so, having finished all the eggs in sight, to the crowd's delight, I playfully started on a box of sardines belonging to someone else. Seeing that rage and stamping did no good, my assiduous friends retired to a corner of the room and engaged in a whispered conversation which appeared to me extremely and unnecessarily prolonged.

Meanwhile, I was perfectly happy ; my train was not due to start for another two or three hours ; it was comfortably warm where I was, and I had eaten to my utter satisfaction. Russian squabbles in Manchuria after all are minor affairs in life, for I knew from private information I had received weeks before, that no one would really dare to obstruct me so long as I kept cool and did not offensively molest other people. Finally the consultation in the corner was over, and, this time, the Cossack advanced on me with a resolute air. As I still refused to answer his questions in Russian he gave me a tug at the sleeve, and said in very broken French, "Monsieur, answer me quickly," Here was my chance ; so, promptly jumping up, I asked him in less mutilated Gallic, what the deuce he meant ? Not allowing him to answer I pulled out and presented to him a very dirty card, and told him that as he had grossly

insulted me by disturbing the sit of my clothes with sleeve tugs I must have satisfaction given to me at once.

These rapid developments so astonished the interfering Cossack that he was utterly floored and turned in perplexity to the station master with arms uplifted in protest. Plainly I was going to have the better of it, so I determined to take the offensive and carry the war into the enemy's camp. The only difficulty was the language question. I only spoke four words of Russian and he not more than ten of French. An interpreter had to be found so I called out to my Chinaman. I explained to him that although we had a difficulty to settle between ourselves, he would oblige me by forgetting it for a quarter of an hour and doing a little interpreting for which I was prepared to pay him the sum of two roubles. Need I say that my offer was accepted. This is the true beauty of the Chinaman ; he is always open to business and perfectly understands that money is the best salve for lost face. So I had it out with the station master and the Cossack officer.

First I asked by what right they demanded my passport—I was on Chinese territory, and the final evacuation of Manchuria had taken place on the 8th of October. From that date no Russian, in either Kirin or Hei-lung-chiang, had any more right than I myself, so would they kindly answer at once as I wished to carefully take down all they said.

After a long parley they were kind enough to

acknowledge that it was Chinese territory on which we stood, but that they had never heard anything about evacuation.

"Oh," I replied, "then either you or the Russian Government are lying, because everyone knows that you have officially withdrawn. Give me a paper signed with your names, saying that you threatened me with arrest unless I showed my passport and I will do so at once. But," I added, "I warn you that, when I get back to Port Arthur, I will personally hand that paper to Alexeieff, who, you may have heard, is your Viceroy."

This was a bombshell in the camp, and they promptly retreated and took up new ground.

No, they protested, they really did not want to see my passport, but they merely wanted to know by what right I had threatened to shoot a Chinaman in the employ of the railway. Because he was cheeky, I answered, and he deserved it. Now, in no other country could you find such an absurd situation as the one I had created. The wretched man all the trouble was about was my interpreter, and he presented such a comical appearance, trying to interpret, and also not to let his indignation get the better of him, that it was impossible to be serious. So things got more and more hopeless. Unable to see the joke of the whole thing, and only desirous of getting out of it, for even the long-booted audience was laughing and slapping itself on the legs, these two officers of the Czar were beautiful to watch. It was then that I discovered one of the

few things the Russian and the Chinaman have in common with one another. They appeal to the crowd when they cannot carry a point, and apparently, to play the game as it is played in the Far East, one should capitulate when the crowd is against one. This is, of course, exactly what always happens in China, among Chinamen, and is the way in which every street dispute is settled. However, brutally disregarding the correct thing, I determined to play no game but my own, and so after a lot of endless talk I was finally abandoned as hopeless. Amidst impolite curses, and with a vast shuffling of feet, everybody withdrew and left me to my own devices.

Meanwhile, the boy was a study. He had been surly when he began his interpreting; then, as things had warmed up he had become interested—for every Chinaman ever born loves an argument, and notes with admiration each point which scores, even if it is against himself. So, in spite of himself, when the enemy had withdrawn, my interpreter had no bile worth speaking of left, and was willing to serve me in any way I wished. So when I reproved him for being insulting in the first instance, he apologised and said he had forgotten his manners amongst the Russians! In this ingenious fashion he converted his two roubles into a larger sum, and left me satisfied. Thus easily can the Chinaman be won over from the man who calls himself his captor.

At every station there are a number of these Russian-speaking Chinese servants. Generally speak-

ing, they have been recruited from the very lowest classes of Chinese, and most of them are not natives of Manchuria—I do not mean Manchus, but Chinese, born and bred there—but have come over from Shantung by junk in search of work. Of course, they have been all absolutely spoilt, for the Russian does not know how to treat servants, excepting as family friends. Apart from this, very few, if any, Russians in Manchuria have any idea of what is the correct thing according to Chinese standards, and what is not. For instance, the Russian has yet to learn that a table servant can never appear in the presence of his superiors without his long coat; and that to have one's pigtail curled round one's head (p'an ch'i lai) and then to speak even to an equal is a direct insult. Even native carters in the north, when they ask the way from one of their fellows, must jump off the shafts and knock their pigtails down or else they will not be answered. Of course, these things do not strike anyone who does not know his Far East; but nevertheless a Highland laddie who stepped into a London drawing-room minus his kilt would hardly produce a worse impression than does the conduct of Chinese menials to their Russian masters in Manchuria in the eyes of respectable Chinese.

At last I got my train and steamed off in the direction of Harbin. "There goes the mad Englishman," everybody said, and the railway employees glared.

Whilst daylight still lasted I watched carefully to see whether there were many troops on the road,

but everywhere things seemed exactly where I had left them. Station after station we passed, and there were always the same eternal green and black railway guards tramping the gravelled platforms, saluting officers, and no other sign of animation. At a few of the bigger places small groups of Chinese stood at the rails and gaped at the eternal mystery of steam hauling so many hundred tons of weight with so small an effort. Sometimes a group of native horsemen, mounted on sturdy little ponies which were decorated with strings of bells that gaily jingled, raced us for a few hundred yards as we started off, and then, as the regulation ten miles an hour was reached by our puffing engine, they fell back and disappeared in the distance. The more I thought about it the more I realised that the Russian does not for one instant anticipate war-like operations so far north until he has been well hammered down south. For many weeks, if not for months, he thinks that it will be Fengtien province that will see exciting times. Who knows whether the cunning little Jap will not steal a march on the heavy-footed Slav and slip into Manchuria through the north-east corner in the way I have already described!

In due time I reached Harbin—for the last time, I hoped, for many days. I tried to find out in the short time at my disposal whether I could catch one of the tiny railway steamers that navigate the upper Sungari, at the lumber station where the railway crosses the upper bend of the river. Of course,

nobody knew anything. Nobody wanted to know anything for that matter, and all looked at me in astonishment. People are fond of upbraiding the British Empire for the way it muddles along. In Russia, and in places where the Russian is, they do not even know how to muddle, and chaos is to be found directly the unexpected occurs. So, desperately making inquiries, it took me all my time to find a man who had even heard of Kirin and steamers. However, finally, I did meet someone who was doubtless the local Baedeker. He knew all about the steamers, he told me, and to begin with he assured me that I was too late, and that navigation was closing. "Where's the ice?" I queried. "Oh," he said, "in the morning there is ice; it is already dangerous!" This was hardly a web-footed mariner, but he was better than nothing, and I had to be content with the very vague ideas he had. Finally, after twenty minutes' exciting talk, he decided that there were no steamers, and that I ought to go back to Port Arthur. What did I want to go to Kirin for, anyway? I had just time to get rid of him and jump into a carriage when the train steamed off. I was but little wiser after two hours' inquiries than I had been before. It is always like this in Manchuria; never try and get accurate information from Russians about anything outside of Port Arthur, Dalny, and Harbin, and do not try to get too much about even them. Russians forget that Manchuria is not altogether comprised within the straggling limits of these towns.

Just as it was getting dark we finished the eighty-five miles' run to the Upper Sungari and crossed over the bridge. It seemed rather a desperate venture getting out at that wayside station in the dark, but comforting myself with the aphorism that nothing venture, nothing have, I determined to push through and trust to luck. So my bags were duly deposited on the rails and I whistled for developments. The train steamed off, a few passengers leaned out of the windows and wondered vastly at my lonely form, and that was all.

On the station platform all was quiet. Even the guards had apparently had enough of it for that day and had undressed until the next day's performance. Presently a Chinaman loafed along and gazed at me idly. Then he started feeling my coat, then my cap, all with the utmost unconcern and the most irritating indifference. "Oh," he said aloud, "it's only sheepskin," and perpetuated the hoary Chinese joke hingeing on a play of characters—yang p'i on a yang jen—a sheep-skin coat on a sheep man, for the phonetic, alas! for sheep and foreigner is the same. A kick aroused my man from his pleasant reverie and he promptly fell into the usual amazement at hearing himself addressed in his own tongue. Yes, he would tell me everything he could. No accommodation to be had for the night, no steamers had arrived for several days—there was apparently no anything in this lonely place according to him. Things appeared more hopeless than ever. However, he added, if I would engage his services he

might be able to find me something better than the open for the night. Of course he was promptly engaged. Shouldering my traps he led me away from the confused mass of scattered buildings lying close to the banks of the Sungari. Around us, once outside the station grounds, there were merely vast expanses of undulating plain. Above, the stars were beginning to twinkle in Manchuria's matchlessly clear skies. A dog barked, the wind rose a little and night had fallen. By no means a cheerful arrival this.

We had progressed some time and I was beginning to imagine that I was being decoyed to my certain death, when I caught sight of a man—evidently not a Chinaman in spite of his long fur coat—who looked at me intently. Top boots peeped out below the skirts of his ample coat, a tall cap covered his head, but he seemed too small for a Russian. He hesitated in front of me for a few seconds, and then said in slow and broken English.

"I beg your pardon, sir, where are you going?"

"I don't know," I answered; "can you tell me?"

"Oh, oh, I am right, you are Englishman."

"Yes," I said, "but who are you?"

"I am Japanese," he answered laughing very quietly and very cautiously. "I am artillery; please, sir, what regiment are you?"

"I cannot tell," I answered, not being willing to disclose my identity; "but I am going to Kirin city," I added.

"So am I," he answered, "I am waiting for

steamer." Thus did my first meeting with the intelligence officers of the gallant Mikado, who to-day swarm in the country, take place, and I was greatly relieved. Henceforth, I need not bother, for if anyone knows Manchuria's new ropes—that is, the alien Russo-Chinese variety—it is the little Japanese.

In due time we found the native inn at which this soldier of the vanguard was staying, and I ate and slept. In the morning we sent out men to find out exactly whether there would be any chance of starting that day, and after a breakfast of maccaroni and hot tea, we sat down to talk and compare notes. I will not give all I learnt, but it is only fair to acknowledge that the only man who has really the most perfect data on the Russian Colossus in Manchuria is the cunning Jap. Beginning on the all important topic of troops, I asked him how he arrived at his calculations of the constantly shifting bodies of men. I did not get as complete an answer as I would have wished, but I was given the straightest tip possible in the circumstances. He told me to find out the butchers' bills in every centre, and to work only on fresh food returns and nothing else. In Port Arthur, an intelligent Englishman had told me the same thing, and subsequently I was able to reduce totals by this method to sane figures.

This Japanese artillery officer had been in the country for seven months, and his memorandum on the movement of heavy guns in all seasons of the year must be very interesting reading. "Winter

good," he said laconically, "spring bad, summer very bad, autumn best."

So, pleasantly talking, we spent the morning, and about eleven o'clock a man from the inn came tearing back with the news that a steamer was actually in sight. We got down to the river as fast as we could, and prepared to board by getting into a small sampan. The steamer came slowly, very slowly, on towards us, but in spite of our violent waving of coats showed no signs of stopping. So we pushed out into mid-stream and watched our opportunity. The Chinaman is the most expert river sailor in the world, and so it was child's play for our boatman to dash in and catch a rope as the stern wheeler stemmed the strong current. In two minutes we were on board, but we were coldly received. One or two people looked at us casually, a Russian sailor muttered something, and, as the Japanese expressed it, "It is very curious and difficult to travel because the people they do not like you." I said, "I think so," and the conversation had ended correctly according to ruling of the Japanese Ollendorff. However, although we got a steady "niet" to everything we asked, food was finally forthcoming, and I annexed a tiny cabin by removing somebody else's things. Keep your pocket-book mainly in your hand, and do not forget to have some roubles inside, and you will get through somehow, where the Russian is, even in a crisis. So we puffed up stream, and blessed our stars that there were only a hundred miles of river to our destination. In half-an-hour

we were forgotten and did as we pleased. Chinese passengers formed the ship's cargo so far as I could see, and there were but two sad-looking Russian travellers on board. The Japanese kept steadily at the ship's side, and murmured under his breath the name of every village we passed. Everything was known to him. Nothing had escaped him. Thus, it is only reasonable to suppose that the Japanese will eventually succeed by being thoroughly prepared, just as the Germans did in the seventies. So the day passed into night, we tied up; and towards the noon of next day I landed in Kirin.

CHAPTER XXV

THE MANLY MISSIONARY OF MANCHURIA

The climate has probably a great deal to do with it, but there are other things which tend to make the missionary of Manchuria a man standing in a different plane to that in other parts of the Far East. With six months of winter and practically no summer, cant and humbug have not much time to take root and thrive. For these things you need warm weather, comfortable conditions which engender the fatal sloth and love of make-believe not to be found in the Far North.

The missionaries in Manchuria began well from the very beginning. It was, of course, the valiant Jesuits who led in the field. The Manchus were hardly seated on the Dragon Throne before (lacking native geographers) they sent some Jesuit fathers to make reliable maps of their ancestral homes and the surrounding country. Again, when in 1689, Chinese Ambassadors left Peking to conclude the famous Treaty of Nerchinsk, which settled the question of the old Manchurian frontier with the Russians for one hundred and thirty years, they

were accompanied by two Jesuits, Father Gerbillon and Pereyra, in the capacity of interpreters, men who had already won names for themselves in the Manchu capital. In the long-winded negotiations which ensued, before the instrument, which gave the Chinese their victory, was finally signed, it was the sagacity of these ghostly diplomats which alone warded off rupture after rupture, and the extent of their influence is shown by the fact that of the three versions of the Treaty concluded, one was in Latin, the official language of these monkish advisers.

All through the eighteenth century, venturesome fathers were travelling into the then little known Three Eastern provinces, and by the nineteenth century they were firmly established in the south. Then it was decided that from Liaotung the faith should be spread north and that men should go forth to convert the long-haired people of the Lower Sungari and the Amur. The gallant Father de la Brunière was the first selected, and starting in 1845, four years after the official birth of Hong Kong, he performed a voyage which is counted memorable even to this day. Leaving a Christian community on the confines of Eastern Mongolia, Father de la Brunière "discovered" A-shih-ho, a then recently-founded Chinese town in the rich valley of the Sungari—only some twenty miles distant from the degenerate Harbin of to-day. Going on from A-shih-ho he made for Sansing, on the junction of the Hurka with the Sungari. "Eight leagues from

A-shih-ho, the country, hitherto inhabited, suddenly changes to an immense desert, which ends at the eastern sea," he exclaims sadly. On the road he found only mere cabins, established for the use of the Government couriers, who kept up a feeble connection between provincial centres and the outer confines of Chinese civilisation. He is loud in his dismay at the terrible gadflies, the wasps, giant mosquitoes, and other insects which troubled him both by night and by day. "Those," he says, "who know the country best never go out without a mosquito cloth—a thick double wrapper covering the head and neck and having but two holes cut for the eyes." His beasts of burden suffered such agonies from the attacks of these pests that some died on the way. This is confirmed by James in the spirited account of his journey to the Long White Mountain. In the moist marshlands and mountains of Manchuria insects grow to a gigantic size and blood flows from the wounds they make as if one were struck with buckshot.

But it is only after he reached and left Sansing behind him that Abbé de la Brunière's account becomes more absorbing than any work of fiction. He found that to penetrate farther north than Sansing in those days except by strategy and stealth was impossible, for the Manchu Government, pledged to a policy of exclusion ever since the days of the Nerchinsk Treaty, forbade, under pain of death, the navigation of the Lower Sungari, so as to avoid Russian complications. But de la Brunière was made

of the toughest stuff and scorned earthly decrees. He was ordered to reach the Yu P'I Ta-tzu, or the long-haired Fish-skin Tartars, and reach them he would, dead or alive. As it proved, he only accomplished his mission in death.

So we find him setting out again secretly on foot. After severe sufferings he reached the first mysterious "Longhairs," and here is an account written whilst he is reposing from his late fatigues in the poor cabin of a Fish-skin. Listen carefully, for it is a true man, such as are hard to find to-day, speaking:

"My sudden appearance occasioned great alarm to these people; my unusual look; the dress, which in that country denoted somewhat of a high rank; the breviary, and the crucifix, formed the subject of a thousand conjectures. Little presents made to the principal persons of the district soon established a familiarity of intercourse which enabled me to speak openly and with authority of the Gospel. My hearers found the religion very fine, but the new doctrine and the preacher who announced it stopped them short at once. One day, it was, I believe, the fourth of my arrival—I was sitting with one of the natives, and just beside us were two of his sons engaged in fishing. In despair of catching anything they pulled in their long lines and were going away, when I said, assuming a jocose tone, 'You do not understand: give me one of your lines.' I threw it about ten paces further, not without much laughter from the spectators. Providence willed that a big fish should bite at the very instant: and I drew in my prey more astonished myself than those who laughed. 'This unknown,' said they among themselves, "has secrets which other men have not, and nevertheless he is not a bad man.' In the evening at supper, there was much talk about the wonderful capture I had made. They wished to know my

Outside a Temple.

secret. Instead of an answer I contented myself with one single question :

"'Do you believe in hell?'

"'Yes,' answered three or four of the best informed ; 'we believe in hell like the bonzes of Sansing.'

"'Have you any means of escaping it?'

"'We have never reflected on that point.'

"'Well then,' I replied, 'I have an infallible secret, by means of which you can become more powerful than all the evil spirits and go straight to Heaven.'

"The first secret gained credence for the second. Thus Divine Providence disposes of all things.

"The next day three Longbeards of the village made their appearance in my chamber, armed with a jug of brandy and four glasses.

"'Your secret,' said they, 'is of awful consequence. If our importunity does not hurt your feelings, we would wish to know in what it consists. Let us begin by drinking.'

"Notwithstanding the natural repugnance I have for Chinese brandy, I thought it necessary to accept the invitation, in order to avoid incurring the aversion of these people, who could be made to know or understand nothing but through its channel. I then commenced to develop my secret, by explaining the dogma of original sin, of hell, of the salvation wrought by Jesus Christ, and the application by the sacraments of the merits of the Saviour. It was in the simplest manner, and by familiar comparisons, that I proceeded. But unluckily my interrogators, taking ten or twelve bumpers to my one, became in five or six minutes incapable of understanding anything. However, I gained favour. They lodged me and my Christian in a very spacious house, which had become vacant by the death of the proprietor. One of the most intelligent men of the village was appointed to teach me their Manchu language, which is more pleasing to their ear than Chinese, although they speak the one as well as the other. The Manchu has become a dead language in Manchuria proper. The natives glory in abandoning the language of their ancestors in favour of that of the new-comers, the Chinese. It

is not so with the Yu P'I Ta-tzu whose language is to the Manchu much the same as the Provençal patois is to the French or Italian." . . .

Is it not charming and natural, this but too brief extract from the diary of the valiant de la Brunière? Continuing in the face of every difficulty, this old-world missionary apostolic finally did actually descend the Ussuri and the Amur only to meet his death at the hands of predatory Gilyaks. But his death made the fire of missionary zeal burn all the more brightly. Catholic missions were founded at A-shih-ho; later on at Payenshushu and Peitun-lintzu, districts to the north of the Sungari where eighty and ninety degrees of cold is registered in winter; and to-day Catholics are numbered by the thousand in many parts of Manchuria, and are ever increasing.

The Protestants, of course, entered the field a good deal later and it was only after the Treaty of Tientsin and the opening of Newchwang in 1858 that we meet the pioneers. Naturally, the forty years' veteran, Dr. Ross of Moukden, is the best known, but there are many others. There are great and important Protestant Missions at Moukden, at K'uan-ch'êng-tzu, and at Kirin, which, acting as centres, dot the country with outlying stations.

These missions are all Scotch or Irish, recruiting strong men accustomed to bitter weather. No sham Chinese clothes are awkwardly worn by them, but they appeared dressed sensibly as in their own country. Again, women missionaries, those rash and ill-advised experiments of the South, do not

wander over the land and offend native susceptibilities. In Manchuria the missionary is working man to man and shows sense, moderation, toleration, and a good humour, which are infinitely refreshing. In Manchuria there are no best men, for they are all that, and there are no moral cowards. Then they fully understand that no white man, no matter how well he may speak the language, can impress and convince Chinese so well as their own countrymen; so converts are but made to become the best missionaries themselves by example and deed, and are called upon to take up the work where the white man leaves off. Hospitals also play an enormous *rôle* in both Protestant and Catholic Missions in Manchuria, and men cured easily, or with difficulty and told a few manly words, are perhaps better fellows than many a so-called convert anxious for his rice.

It is delightful what a sense of proprietorship the inhabitants of the towns without exception feel in their veterans. "Have you seen our Dr. So-and-so?" is always one of the first questions in Kirin or Moukden; and if you answer "No," even your humble carter will tell you it is your duty to go and do so. So you see these men have got very near to the people, although they do not advertise. They are just manly and convincing, and the simple northerners believe in them.

Of course the Boxers played havoc with the missions in 1900. The missionaries hung on to the very last, but they had to go, all except the Catholics in the Far North, who, lying out of the beaten

track, were quite safe. Nearly everything was lost, houses were burnt, converts were killed. In Moukden alone over half the men and women who were known to have connections with the missions were brutally slaughtered. But things soon settled down again. A Russian officer's wife, who came into Manchuria by almost the first train in 1901, told me three Englishmen were with her who were going to rebuild and reconvert at a time when the musketry had hardly ceased firing. "Très hommes, ces missionaires anglais," she added. Exactly, it is the whole thing in a single sentence; the Manchurian missionary has a reputation to keep up, and he intends to do so.

At first the Russian military attempted to obstruct the returning enthusiasts. Two were arrested and locked up for a time. They had rough khaki coats on, energetic faces, and looked every inch the English soldiers the Russian took them to be. But that soon stopped. Men who can slip through the country where other men are helplessly jammed are not easy to deal with and molest; and then, you see, they had been there before, knew the ropes, and could raise much discontent if they were ill-treated.

So, in spite of what the ignorant write, Catholic and Protestant missionaries have returned to Manchuria, and are just as hard at work again as ever. Their names are household names in Manchuria; their arms are full of strength, and, crowning blessing of all, they have no southern cant. So, good luck to you, missionaries of Manchuria.

CHAPTER XXVI

KIRIN—THE INLAND DOCKYARD

KIRIN lies on the left bank of the Sungari. The valley of the river is surrounded by a vast amphitheatre of hills. To the south they grow into mountains, whose peaks can be but faintly traced by the eye, and are clothed in perpetual snow. To the north they undulate away in graceful, pine-clad ripples, which the clear atmosphere of Manchuria brings far nearer than they really are. Eighty or a hundred miles to the south-east, on the road to Korea, is the famous "Ch'ang Pai-Shan" or Long White Mountain, the mythical home of the Manchu. Nearer are the Small White Mountain and other historical landmarks.

The city pushes so close to the river that it overhangs, and the houses facing the stream, fearing lest this unseemly pressure topple them over the banks into the water, are partly supported by and partly built on huge wooden piles. The Sungari is in a hurry here to escape from the hills and mountains that threaten it on every side, and so, jerking round the town in a sharp bend, it rushes rapidly

in a mighty stream, some three hundred yards broad, towards the vast rolling plains of Central Manchuria that so need its waters.

Kirin is well called by the natives "ch'uan ch'ang," or the "dockyard," for it lies in the very centre of a splendid timbered country, and builds boats and junks for all inland Manchuria. Lines of junks, piles of junks, junks galore, crowd the river; and on the banks, skeletons of old junks, and the tender outlines of embryo junks not yet born and as yet unable to take to the water, pin one's attention and insist on the name.

On the land side the city is nominally protected —very nominally—by a crenellated grey wall some fifteen feet high. Eight gates give access within. On the river there is no wall, but wooden doors, which should be closed and guarded at night, are to be seen.

Kirin is the seat of the Tartar General of the province, or the Military Governor as he is more generally called, and in the old days had a formidable garrison of drilled Manchu troops. There are no more to be drilled, alas! for the Russian has come and stayed, and until he is ejected by someone else the Chinese soldiery had best keep discreetly in the background. Kirin has also an up-to-date arsenal filled with German and English machinery, where rifles are tolerably turned out—and are now stamped with the sign of the Russian bondage. Wood is so plentiful in Kirin that even when the boats, the coffins, the furniture, and the countless

other wooden things for which the city is famous have had their demands satisfied, there is enough left over to fence in every compound with huge logs driven into the ground, with gigantic planks, two or three inches thick, spread across them.

Our steamer tied up as soon as we arrived in front of a great caravanserai, guarded by a huge wooden fence, after the orthodox Kirin manner. A somewhat miserable Russian tricolour, suspended from a bamboo pole, proclaimed that the place was Russian-occupied, and that it was the steamer headquarters. Two other little steamers were there also—one so small that it hardly deserved the name of a launch. A single tall Russian, with a towering fur cap, stood on the banks and looked at us with eager eyes. Around him were crowds of Chinese, whom the rapidly coming winter was outwardly converting into characteristic Manchurians. Their feet were shod in leather *wu-la*, a curious local shoe. Fur and felt caps of every imaginable shape, relieved by crowns of brightly-coloured cloth, were crushed down on their heads, and rough fur-coats of dirty sheep or dog-skin finished them off. A dominant note was struck in their trouserings—the claret colour so much admired in the North being greatly affected.

We scrambled ashore, and the tall Russian spoke to us. My Japanese officer smiled, and told me in English not to speak to him, as it was none of his business. So we pushed in amongst the Chinese and called for an inn-runner. Immediate result:

chaos, fierce shouts, and frantic fighting, "Here you are! this is the Red Lantern Inn known to all, where everybody goes." "Who does not know the Dragon Pool? Disregard all foolish talk and come to me." Such were some of the cries that greeted us, and luggage was torn from hand to hand with a desperate energy which would have filled the home tout with green envy. Finally the Dragon Pool got us—why or how, no one was quite certain. It was a desperate struggle; I was pushed by an irresistible weight on to the shafts of a cart, my luggage banged in after me, and the valiant hero from the "Dragon Pool" looked round on the crowd with the benign satisfaction of one whose merits have at last been rewarded. He had won fairly, for his lungs and arms were full of strength, and so the crowd—for the Chinese crowd never cheers—spoke their approval in piquant personalities of untranslatable broadness. Your Chinaman of the lower classes does not mince matters, and the broader the joke the louder the laughter.

So in time we were duly installed in our inn, and the usual clean-up proceeded. My Japanese, after we had eaten, told me significantly that he had friends to see and that I would know him no more. So I bade him a warm good-bye, hoping that the next time he came to Kirin it would be in the guise of a conqueror, and not as a humble tramp such as I.

Presently, I went out and found the native bank where I had previously arranged that my letters

should be sent. I duly received my correspondence, and with it the only reliable news I had for over half a month, although I had been moving amongst civilised men. It is quite useless to expect any reliable carriage of mails under the Russian system in Manchuria, and, with the exception of Harbin, you might as well address a letter to the North Pole as to any other place in Manchuria.

My news was not reassuring although it was already old. War had not been declared, but two fresh scares had been wafted up to Port Arthur, and preparations were proceeding night and day. Troops, everlasting troops, were moving, were being drilled, were being reviewed; more earthworks were going up; flour was pouring in; and many other exciting details were added, not omitting the sensational arrest of Japanese spies said to have detailed plans in their possession of all the forts. Very warlike was my news, and I was warned to lose no time and not to stray too far from the railway. So I decided I could only give myself one day in Kirin, and that, as I had to make eighty miles by road before I came on the railway again, I would have to hustle. I got back to my inn and hired a "san-t'ao-ch'ê," or three-muled cart, to be ready the next day at four o'clock in the morning, and I stipulated for opium mules. So-called opium mules do not smoke or chew the baneful drug, as one might suppose, but are merely engaged in the transport of opium, which, being precious, travels with exceptional quickness. Then

I went out, paid calls on certain officials to whom I had letters of introduction, elicited a great deal of information, and gave some in return.

Kirin is still outwardly very much in the hands of the Russians, although evacuation should have taken place. A constant shifting of troops has been going on during the crisis, and there can be no doubt that the composite Russian force in the city has been most carefully made up with an eye for eventualities. There were six companies of a rifle battalion, three companies of artillery, and two sotnias of Cossacks—probably considerably over two thousand men in all. The telegraph office is entirely under Russian control although there are some Chinese operators attached ; the Commissair drives out in the streets in a two-horsed barouche of fashionable make ; the youthful Hebrews of the Russo-Chinese Bank appear mounted on horseback, with Cossacks before and after them ; on the streets the Russian soldier is everywhere seen. In a word, the Russian in Kirin, thinking himself unobserved by the maritime Powers, is manifestly parading the town for the benefit of the inhabitants, hoping that the insistence of his uniform will in time work a miracle and make the Chinaman love him. There are even a few Russian shops in the city where tinned things, wines, and vodka are retailed by curious rough-looking assistants in top boots, and loose tunics fastened in at the belt by leather belts.

But near each Russian shop, sad to relate, there is a Chinese store where you may have exactly the

same things a good deal cheaper, a good deal fresher, and a good deal better. So the Russian ventures are becoming financially more pale and more debilitated from day to day, and the time is not far off when they will collapse and be known no more. How irresistible is the Chinaman on his own ground unless confronted by methods superior to his own!

The Kirin streets are gay, and the people are perfectly undisturbed by all these frantic rumours of war which so torture the rest of the Far East. The centre of the city is given up to shops and the main streets are bright with the beloved northern colour, vermilion red. Vermilion posts support gigantic sign-boards covered with great square characters pressed so tight on top of one another in their haste to complete the tale of all their renowned wares that they are almost flat. There are all sorts of good and quaint things to buy in these Kirin shops. There is beautiful carved wood, all manner of stamped leather, furs, bearskins, tiger and leopard skins from the Eastern forests, old curious coloured silks—in fact everything that a yellow man may desire.

The stamped leather and the furniture shops are the most interesting. Here you see things quite different from anything in China proper being made under your very eyes. Gigantic card-cases a foot long and six inches broad, built to contain the impressive red cards of important magnates, are carved out of deer-skin, stamped with fantastic

designs, and then coloured a beautiful barbaric red and green. Solid leather boxes of every shape and size are rapidly made up from rolls of tanned skin, and more often than not the beloved red is roughly smeared on. Oak cabinets, oak tables, and oak curio-stands may be had in every variety. Everything is interesting and novel, and emphasises the fact that Kirin stands on the edge of giant forests full of fine woods and fine beasts, and that of the one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants crowding the city the major part are busily engaged in converting the raw into the finished article. Kirin is not in any sense a mere *entrepôt* for trade like most of the Manchurian towns—places that have grown rich from handling agricultural produce. Kirin is a busy manufacturing and industrial centre, with an old-world history dating back for centuries, and should have great importance in the future. It is characteristic, very characteristic, of Manchuria; and it has so much wood that it does a thing I have never heard of before where the yellow man is—it paves some of its streets with wood. Fancy the pigtailed man tending the streets; it is surely fantastic and unheard-of!

The Kirin market-places are a delight to visit. It was too early to see them at their best, but still there was a goodly display. It is, however, only when everything is frozen hard and nothing can spoil that the great slaughter is begun by native huntsmen, and that you may have a choice of such things as venison, wild boar, pheasant, partridge

the renowned tamara, and—delight of delights—sturgeon's roe *au naturel*, alias fresh caviar. Even the Manchurian cook, to whom Brillat Savarin represents nothing, can produce a native meal which would be a veritable treat, had you but some bread to finish it off. John Chinaman of the North knows not puppy-dogs' tails and everlasting rice; he eats meat, plenty of meat in shreds, game, flour, cakes, macaroni, and millet much more than anything else.

The afternoon I wandered the streets it was splendid weather. The sun shone hotly and fiercely, as it always does here in the North, but the heat is healthy and even in the dog-days no sunstroke need be feared in Manchuria. Everybody in the town was out, for no one so hates bad weather and so enjoys the fine as your Chinaman. The gaiety of crowds or the *jênao* (hot bustle) of the streets is not more loved in Paris than here. Little gongs clattered to attract the attention of saunterers to piles of fruit and other edibles; carters shouted as they urged high-stepping mules harnessed to official carts in which were seated the honoured spouses of the official world, discreetly shaded by curtains so that their virtue could not be openly assailed; the public story-teller, a man who is hardly seen in the South, could be seen perched on a high stool raucously recounting the apocryphal adventures of some paladin of the good old days before the advent of the pigtail, and ending up by telling his listeners significantly that man lives by food alone

and that he was very thirsty. Groups of Manchu girls with rouge-smeared cheeks, and pink handkerchiefs tied loosely round their necks, spoke the four tones to perfection and admired shyly. Crowds moving, crowds standing, crowds eating; Kirin is evidently indifferent to the threatened war, and politics and spheres of influence be hanged!

I entered a tobacco shop and bought some Manila cigars, for civilisation of a sort is spreading even where Nurhachu strode. Things were not so bad, the salesman told me. "Did you lose much in the bad year?" I asked. "Oh, yes!" he replied. "Everything went, but our people were as bad as the Russians."

It is the same story everywhere. After the Russians came a species of Commune during a brief interregnum, with mobs and male *pétroleurs* (for the women take no part in this sort of thing in the Far East), and the destruction of wealthy streets was soon completed. However, three years have passed by since then, and railway roubles, easily earned, have brought prosperity again.

Finally I returned to the bank to make my adieus. The "Joint Industries Silver Hong," for that was its full name, was sceptical about everything, sceptical of the Russian power, of the coming war. "What can the Russians do?" they said; "they have troops quartered in the Yamens, but our officials do all the work and get all the money. And then we are raising troops again. In Kirin we have got four *ying* already, and these new men are better

than the old ones. We shall win in the long run." "Yes," I said, "but, supposing war really comes, and Russia openly annexes Manchuria as a first step, and Japan fails to beat her in the end, what are you going to do?"

"Oh," they answered, "there are still fatzu (ways out of the difficulty), and it is not so bad as that yet."

The Kirin bankers have evidently accumulated too many dollars and become somewhat foolish. But they have had some reason to become so, for the fatal sloth and inaction of the East have invaded the ranks of the Russians, and the armed men are already looked on with contempt. The Chinaman's superb pride makes him forget awkward and unpalatable historical facts with wonderful rapidity, and argues that diplomacy and silent working always win in the long run. His history at least proves it.

So Kirin is quite quiet and reasonably contented. A powerful and determined Manchu Governor is working ceaselessly in the interests of the Chinese, and already he has regained much that he had lost. Troops are being drilled and trade has been resumed. Guns are being turned out of the arsenal, officials are collecting taxes; all is much the same as before. The Russian remains, it is true, but daily the *vis inertiæ* of the enormous mass of native population, their superior diplomacy and business methods, their curious adaptability, which, while it tolerates the new, does not cede an inch of the old, are all working towards one end.

The Russian still strategically dominates Kirin, but he has got hold of the shadow and the Chinaman has the substance. The railway is going to come to Kirin from K'uan-ch'êng-tzu, the great market-town eighty miles off, and then the Russian thinks that he will be stronger. He is strengthening himself with chains which, instead of supporting him, merely tie him down the more. Already the existing iron track is an intolerable and unprofitable burden. Every extra verst means more roubles to the Chinaman, more exhausting of Russian treasure, and not a step nearer the ultimate Russian goal. Until the Slav changes it is all no use and an idle dream.

CHAPTER XXVII

FROM KIRIN TO MOUKDEN VIA K'UAN-CH'ÊNG-TZU

It was five in the morning when we started. The carter blew on his hands, lighted the eternal Manchurian pipe which decorates the mouth of every Northerner, and chirruped to his mules. "Trrr-ta-takh," he cried in the curious mule-driver's language of the North. Up went the long ears, the leaders hauled their hempen traces taut and sprang forward. Over the central gatestone which blocks every northern courtyard entrance cleverly stepped the shaft-mule, and we banged through into the streets. "Yi-lu-p'ing an" (peace to you on your journey) chorused the inn drawers, bowing their knees after the Manchu style; we were off.

It did not take long to get outside the city, for the keen morning air made the mules frisky, and they required no urging. On the pools of mud and water which decorate every Chinese city thin ice could be seen, which meant that in a few more days and with a few more blows from the north, winter would be on the country. On top of the city gate through which we passed waved a tricolour, and at

the battered guard-house below were a few Russian and Chinese soldiers. Joint guarding is evidently *l'ordre du jour* at Kirin, and appearances are being kept up on both sides.

By seven the sun was gaily shining and fur coats could be discarded. The road west to K'uan-ch'êng-tzu winds in and out among the hills and the scenery is charming. Up and up the road zigzagged and twisted, and Kirin was soon far behind us, hidden in the river valley. After a few miles the summit of this rising hill-land is reached at the Lao-yeh-ling or the Lao-Yeh pass. Here were two lovely temples to the Gods of War nestled among oaks, willows, and the graceful Manchurian elms. Round about us the hills rolled away in gentle curves, and in the distance hamlets were to be seen in whose vicinity faint blue smoke rose slowly to the skies. "Charcoal burning," said my carter, in an explanatory grunt; "all do it here, sir. There are no crops." It was a peaceful and delightful landscape out of which should emerge not prosaic twentieth century travellers, but the gallant men in quilted armour who swept the provinces into Nurhachu's lap. Around Kirin is typical Manchu country, and it requires no effort of imagination to re-people the glades with men of heroic appearance.

The road we were on was the great high road which majestically connects Kirin and Moukden, and then sweeps on to Peking. In winter the scene is full of animation, and vast caravans of

carts crowd the road, piled high with every manner of merchandise on their way to the southern marts. It was too early, of course, to see much now, but the very width of the road—a hundred feet in some places—and the manner in which it was scored with countless wheel-tracks, bore evidence to a mighty traffic during the propitious season. At Sanchan we branched off due west, and whipped up rapidly as we left the great ruts of the main road behind us and got the flat of the smaller way. We did not meet many people on this road, and the few that were to be seen were in small hooded carts like myself, travellers bent on business, and hastening as fast as they could.

At noon we unyoked for two hours; "Seventy-five li in seven hours," quoth the carter. Before two we were off again, and by dark we had done more than half the way. Early to rise was the last order I gave, and the carter assured me I would not oversleep myself.

The stars were still shining when a hoarse voice called me: "Foreign teacher, arise; all is ready." Outside the mules were stamping in the courtyard, and finishing off the grain that had fallen to the ground; from the outhouses men called to one another; pigs and dogs were making uncouth noises. Everything was moving uneasily with that clearness of sound which is the privilege of the small hours. Ugh, they rise early in Manchuria! Scalding tea was hastily drunk. I choked myself with some hard-boiled eggs of prehistoric appear-

ance, and once more I was seated on the shafts of the cart.

It was hardly light when we left, but always the same undulating hill ground could be seen dimly surrounding us. A splendid land for guerrilla warfare this. Cultivation had, however, succeeded the scrub-oak and coarse grass of the day before, and farmhouses were now dotted here and there in sheltered spots in increasing numbers. At nine we stopped and breakfasted, the carter and myself together eating bowls of coarse macaroni until we could eat no more. "Ah," said the carter, "this travelling is good. Who would not travel with a full belly?" finishing up with the odd Chinese interrogative of approbation.

The mules were whipped on, and we cantered along with a renewed rocking and shaking that is the acme of misery. Oh, the bumping of the springless Peking cart, your dirges have already been sung many times, but the bumps still remain and the roads are ever worse. The carter was, however, festive and reflective, and mused aloud on the power of money with surprising candour. "You pay me well," he said, "and we do it in two days; it is a three days' journey at a good price. Another pays me poorly, and I will not hurry, and it is four days." Mules and their travelling power did not interest me, however, so I abruptly put to him the question:

"Do you like the Russians?" I said, "and what do the people here think?" "The Russians," he

answered evasively, "are a difficult people. There are good ones and bad ones. I have met both. All men belong to one family." It is the usual Chinese answer. They hedge first to watch and then jump the right way.

"But," continued the carter, "I would like to know one thing which all are asking. Who is paying for these soldiers? They spend much money, but no one knows where they get it from, for it is our officials who still collect the taxes. For three years this has continued, and yet it ends not."

I tried to explain high politics to him, but he refused to see the good sense of it. "We have seen much fighting before, but never such things. If they are going away why do they not go quickly? If they are going to stop, let them say so, otherwise there will be trouble."

As if to drive the point of his arguments home, a horseman mounted on a sorrowful white pony came ambling down the road towards us. A string of bells slung on a piece of thick red rope swung to and fro with a violent jingle, and as he came nearer and nearer he waved to us violently with his short Manchurian riding stick.

"They are coming," he shouted, as soon as he had met us. "Who?" asked the carter in the clipped vernacular of the road. "Sao-to-ssu-soldiers," he answered; "cavalry and guns. I have seen and go to warn my people."

So we went on with fresh zest. K'uan-ch'êng-tzu

was now only a few miles away, and troops had been reported in the mysterious Chinese way to be coming in great numbers by rail from the north during the last few days. Any hour might bring war, for never has a situation been so dangerous. We turned a corner, and then a mile or so away we saw the road covered with black and white dots bobbing along irregularly. It was the soldiers. The carter swore quietly and drove morosely for a few minutes. Then as the dots got bigger and bigger and finally broadened into men and horses, he turned on me and asked me roughly whether there was anything to be feared.

"Sometimes there is trouble, and I would not lose my cart and mules. Let us drive into the fields and wait."

I insinuated gently that if he left the road I would hurt him—snap your leg in two, is the emphatic Chinese expression. "At least, then, get inside the cart," he argued, "so that they may not know who you are. If it is known there will certainly be trouble." But I remained on the shafts and refused to budge. So in a quarter of an hour we had met the oncoming troops and stopped to let them pass. First came a couple of squadrons of cavalry—not Cossacks, but Russian Dragoons these, big men on big horses. Then the guns clanked past, two batteries of big guns and a battery of light artillery. The rear was brought up by long lines of green army waggons, guarded by files of white-coated infantrymen, belonging to Siberian regiments, their shoulder-straps said. There could not have been far short of

a thousand men ; so Kirin was being reinforced, and the Russians were evidently beginning to be nervous about the north-east frontier and the Possiet Bay possibility. Battery and squadron commanders threw curious glances at me as they passed, but although one or two made as if they were going to stop, not a word was spoken nor a question asked. Perhaps I was mistaken for the ubiquitous missionary ; perhaps I was taken at my true valuation ; but in any case, no matter what was thought, the Russian is becoming so discreet and timid what with the constant outcry raised in the Press and the trouble which the molesting of other Europeans always raises, that they prefer to let all alone. It is after all not the coming and going of single men which is going to interfere with Russian plans, but the marshalling of big battalions and their heavy onslaught. Amid these reflections K'uan-ch'êng-tzu finally hove in sight, and in due course we passed through a broken gateway and entered the city. We had done 252 li, or eighty-four miles, in less than two days. The Manchurian mule is splendid and deserves all praise.

K'uan-ch'êng-tzu is a mighty place as places go in Manchuria ; and just as Harbin on the Sungari shows the immense possibilities of the country from the European point of view, if the question were only attacked in the right way, so does this Chinese town give an idea of the fabulous wealth which has already been developed. The main street running north and south is ten li long, and majestically sweeps

from one end of the town to the other. On either side are serried ranks of shops and warehouses. Many of them being unable to find a sufficient frontage down the main street have pushed far down the side streets, and made them too gay with sign-posts, sign-boards, and obelisks. Pedestrians, carts, horses, mules, and caravans block the roads, and all look frantically busy.

Every manner of merchandise can be found in K'uan-ch'êng-tzu, for it is the clearing-house of inland Manchuria, and is not so much concerned in producing as it is in receiving from all points and then forwarding to others. From the north and east come all kinds of agricultural produce ; from the west Mongolia sends its ponies, its skins, its hides, and its flocks ; from the south Newchwang forwards bales of cottons, stacks of iron, and a thousand other things to be distributed over the country in payment for what has been bought for export. But it is perhaps in the side streets clustering close to the gates that the solid importance of the place is revealed more than anywhere else. Here are vast caravanserais adjoining pawnshops to which country produce is brought, unloaded, and stored in mighty stacks, money being advanced as soon as delivery has been made to the pawnbrokers. With the freezing of the roads seven and eight mule carts, with a four thousand pound dead weight capacity, begin the groaning work of carrying down to the ice-bound Liao these countless thousands of tons. The opening of the river sees fleets of junks ascend

from Newchwang and convey to the seaport for shipment that which has already for months slowly travelled from point to point. This is the great trade of Central Manchuria in a few sentences.

In this fashion K'uan-ch'êng-tzu has risen yearly in importance until there can be no doubt that numerically it is the biggest city in Manchuria. Hosie estimated the population at 120,000 in 1896, but this is far too moderate an estimate for to-day. Indeed the railway has brought so many thousands of sturdy Shantung and Chihli labourers into Manchuria who have been pleased with the country and therefore remained, and such a demand has been created for so many things, that there can be no doubt that K'uan-ch'êng-tzu has prospered exceedingly, and that the population has greatly increased. Judging by the size of the town and the crowds in the streets there is no reason why the Chinese estimate of a quarter of a million of inhabitants should be considered excessive.

A mud wall of dilapidated appearance surrounds the town, and the gates are forlorn looking in their decay. The Chinese, however, care nothing for the beauty of their cities so long as there is money to be made, and all K'uan-ch'êng-tzu's spare cash is invested in trade. At the east gate there is to be found the only architecture in the town worth a look—a temple with out-buildings artistically decorated with elephants' heads and other fantastic designs. The Chinese temple is surely something of a brief history of the Chinese people—early magnificence smacking

of a Golden Age, succeeded by centuries of absolute materialism and disregard for appearances.

I saw hardly any Russians in the streets of K'uan-ch'êng-tzu, although there is a branch of the Russo-Chinese Bank there, a telegraph office with white-uniformed clerks, and heavy detachments of railway guards at the station. The station is, however, away to the west of the town and lives its own life entirely apart from that of the Chinese city. It is true that I saw a Cossack riding rapidly away from the Bank with a portfolio under his arm—one of the military messengers so obligingly placed at the disposition of that political institution all over Manchuria—but even he failed to impress me with the complete russification of the town.

Evening came, and I passed out of the city to the railway station. Having feasted moderately at the buffet I prepared to make the time pass as quickly as I could until the small hours and the Harbin mail train arrived. At the station there are extensive buildings all ready for a trade and bustle that will not come. Immense stacks of firewood are also stored all along the track, for the coal burning line is to the south of K'uan-ch'êng-tzu. Railway guards hang about in little knots, but apart from this there is really nothing to be seen. Later in the evening a Russian horse-dealer entered the buffet-room and beguiled the time and his audience by talking loudly of the wonderful prospects of this part of the country.

"To the west is Mongolia, with flat plains. I

can buy and drive in ponies for thirty roubles a head without any trouble. In Port Arthur and Harbin I can sell for one hundred roubles. My profits will therefore be, at least, fifty roubles. Twenty voyages a year are easy to make, and if I bring fifty ponies each time, it will mean a thousand ponies sold, and fifty thousand roubles profit. In a few years I will be rich."

Everybody was enchanted with his candour, and applauded his enterprise; and the eyes of the youthful railway employees, who pass all their time smoking eternal cigarettes, and drinking eternal tea at the buffet, listening with eager ears to all these traveller's tales, glistened. They were fairly struck dumb. Is it not a cruel fate to be tied down to a railway, with nothing much to do, and very little chance of squeeze, what with the slackness of trade, and the yellow man's generalship in finance, when there are such prospects as these on all sides?

The horse-dealer's talk is a fair sample of the foolish and fatuous way in which all Russians in Manchuria confidentially tell you that they are going to make millions. It is always something in the future—dimly seen, and never realised. But has it ever been the experience of the European that the Chinaman allows the white man to make all the profits without attempting anything himself? And yet in Harbin they tell you it will be a great place commercially; "Flour, timber, and cattle," they vaguely say—"these we will soon handle in

vast quantities and make our fortunes." Time alone will show.

In due course my train arrived and left. Night passed into day. K'ai-yüan and Tiehling were left behind, with ever-increasing numbers of uniforms at every station the farther we got south —beggars with almost familiar faces implored us to remember that their kouskous was really niet. A few Russians in the train, lately arrived from St. Petersburg, marvelled in ever-ascending choruses at the number of yellow faces, and wondered what had become of Russia and her emigrants. It was all the same thing over again, and every time one thinks over the question, the hollowness of Russia's pretensions grows more astounding.

So the sun passed the meridian and slowly sank, flooding the rich country with golden light. Down here in Fengtien province it was no longer cold. The great Ever-White Mountains, and their vast chains of outlying hills, shield Moukden from the north-east, and make winter a good deal longer coming than is the case only two hundred miles to the north. At a quarter to four the carriage wheels began to screech more than usual—a sign that the brakes were being clumsily applied. "Aha, what is that?" everybody was asking, and the Petersburg travellers gazed in ecstasy. You may well ask, all of you, for it is a sight of the *terra incognita* to the Russian: Moukden's sombre walls are standing out among the trees two miles away, and round the station a

vast concourse of brown-faced men with carts, donkeys, mules, and ponies ; all are gazing, gazing at you until even the most foolish must have realised that real Manchuria is found off the rails, and not on them, and that it is the Chinaman who is master, by reason of his swamping numbers and his superior intelligence.

CHAPTER XXVIII

MANNERS, MORALS, AND MEN IN THE RUSSO-CHINESE EMPIRE

You will perhaps have gathered from what I have already written, that a somewhat extraordinary state of affairs obtains in Russian Manchuria; I mean entirely apart from the crisis, the threatened war, Russian aggression, Japanese stiff-backedness, and such like. Coming from a moderately-civilised place, and entering thoroughly into the local life of such places of the Russo-Chinese Empire (founded by Alexander Ular) as are really tangible—that is, places that exist, having Russian men, Russian women (plenty of women, by the bye), Russian children, and also Russian houses, places, in fact, that are not merely the paper creation of imaginative writers,—your preconceived ideas on many matters receive a rude shock. In certain things you have been taught long ago by some excellent person that this is good and proper, and that bad and nasty. Of course, it is true that as you have become older you will have lost many of your

respectable ideas, and have become mainly like the other countless millions of men of your own age; sometimes a little better, possibly a little worse. But in spite of this falling away you will always cherish a huge respect, even though it be a trifle vague, for those first ideals, and although your respect only extends to the length of a worship very much abstract, this attitude of mind will be at least something gained, seeing that it provides an unfailing mental corrective.

With the Russian, as you learn to know him in Manchuria, it is quite different. He apparently starts from the very beginning with no ideals at all; he has a religion which cannot be got at, so to speak, outside of his church, and he is more of an empty formalist, however good he may be, than any cathedral priest in Roman St. Peter's, who chatters and takes snuff during the elevation of the Host. To the Russian, religion, ideals, and all the other things that go hand in hand are contained in the outward pomp and show of the Greek Church. All is mere form and formula, to be learnt by heart, and intoned with deep-voiced fervour, but with no significance except from a dramatic, scenic, and hysterical point of view.

In Manchuria you have only to see the soldiery at prayer to understand the wholesale conversion of the pagan Saxon, Frank, and Teuton bands of many centuries ago. Squint your eyes up so small that you can but dimly see the booted Slav in front of you, push your memory half back to pictures of

Viking pirates and freebooters being converted *en masse*, and you have a sensation something akin to that of Kipling's youth in the finest story ever written. You become dimly conscious of things as they were long ago, for the average Russian—not the Russian Jew—is an uncouth pre-Renaissance man in the flesh with a thin veneer of nineteenth and twentieth centurydom smeared prematurely over him, with the other centuries left out.

Perhaps you who live in Russia will laugh at this, but it is at least true in Manchuria. For in this country many Russians have been living more or less completely unrestrained for several years, and the results have been distinctly atavistic. Without the cold reserve of the Englishman, the common-sense of the German, or the intellectuality of the Frenchman, the Russian has nothing to fall back upon, once he is thrown entirely on his own resources, without any controlling hand to restrain him. With the breaking-down and removal of artificial barriers, you therefore have *le Russe* completely *au naturel*, and the lack of the usual sauce which should accompany him to make him palatable is very much felt.

For remember that Manchuria along the railway has been kept in a nominal state of war for upwards of three years now. By this I do not mean that the stories of hunghutzu bands constantly coming into conflict with the Russian strong arm are in any way true, for they are not, and everyone in Manchuria understands the farce and why it is

Siberian Troops at a Manchurian Country House.

kept up. Sometimes a couple of dozen "bad men"—as they are called in the Wild West of another country—have held up and robbed a train just to show their contempt for Russian policing arrangements; but such outbreaks are distinctly sporadic, and not at all indicative of the true state of affairs. It has, however, served Russia's purpose to pretend that the country is very unsettled and very dangerous, and so, applying this idea to the government of her own people, she has allowed them to follow their own sweet wills, and to act like mere untamed Huns in their daily lives.

The first result of all this is to be perceived in the extraordinary license regarding women in Manchuria. The Chinaman, although he doubtless regards the whole question from a wrong standpoint, is, on the whole, a virtuous and a clean man in his sexual relations, and on no account will he sell his womenkind for mere gold or paper. Confronted with possibilities at which I shrink from doing more than hint, the Chinaman has done the best he could in the circumstances. Briefly, Chinese women have been removed as far as possible from the reach of the Russian, and, therefore, along the railway from Port Arthur to both the Eastern and Western frontiers of Manchuria you will hardly ever see a native woman walking about openly. Where they have all gone to, I do not know; but from conversations with many local Chinese I have come to the opinion

that the women are merely hidden in their own houses and courtyards, and that the whisper of "sao-ta-ssu" (Chinese phonetic for the Russian "soldat") sends them scuttling like frightened rabbits into secret hiding places, from which they cannot be dragged forth alive. This is in itself a pleasant state of affairs, but there is more yet to come.

The Russian in bulk, therefore, deprived of the women of the country, has encouraged a free and unrestricted importation by rail and sea of the women of Eastern Europe, and they have come literally in their thousands. If the dictum be true that good women uplift one, then it is equally so that bad women drag one down with unexampled rapidity. The presence of the sweepings of Poland, Roumania, Servia, Austria, and Russia itself, has had such appalling results on the health of the troops and civilians alike in Manchuria, that even the Russian authorities have themselves from time to time become alarmed and made ill-conceived and worse-executed attempts to rid themselves of these pests. For not only do these women come themselves, but they bring in their train hundreds of debased *souteneurs*, with whom every kind of vice is the virtue of their existence, and these last, infesting every place, spread the disease of their minds over the lower classes, and accustom the prurient to still worse excesses.

Whilst this debauchery proceeds apace amidst the lower thousands, the upper hundreds are

Soldiers in Summer Kit on the road to Kirin.

not remaining idle. Probably content to act at first in the veiled fashion of Europe in their little delinquencies and affairs, the insidious poison of bad example unreproved has ended by producing a cynicism and a disregard for the conventionalities in Manchuria which even astonished a Petersburg Imperial Guardsman and a merchant of Tomsk, with whom I once travelled for two days and who repeatedly said that they "n'en revenaient pas," and were "épatés jusqu'à la vertige," so extraordinary were the spectacles they had constantly witnessed. Plainly, the Russian has travelled very far in more ways than one since he came to the Far East. Officers of standing drive out with their loves in broad daylight, salute their generals unblushingly; feast it in public restaurants, and act in every way as if the marriage tie only existed on the other side of the Amur.

CHAPTER XXIX

MOUKDEN—THE OLD MANCHU CAPITAL

THE outward appearance of Moukden is easily described. It is simply a miniature Peking—a Manchu capital before the glory of the ownership of eighteen vast provinces and their outlying lands had made it too cramped and insignificant for the founders of the "Great Pure Dynasty."

Like Peking, it has high walls, but they are not so high or so imposing as those of the great Northern capital. It has also an imitation Temple of Heaven, but this again is infinitely more humble and unassuming than the noble and magnificent altars of Peking. There are even such things as a Drum Tower and a Bell Tower here, whose mournful voices awoke the inhabitants in the old days when menaced by some cruel enemy, and bade them hasten to the defence of the city. Beyond the walls, in a secluded spot, is an imperial tomb—the Fu Ling, or Happy Tomb, where, hidden in graceful groves, lie the earthly remains of Tai Tsung, Nurhachu's son, who almost placed his feet upon

the Dragon Throne through his obedient following of his father's dying words.

But I am going too fast, and must picture things as they appear coming from the station, else the new local colour and modern conditions be lost, and my object defeated.

Formerly, the Chinese Eastern Railway avoided the purlieus of Moukden as it would any holy of holies. The line when it was first built swept west by north in a vast half moon, leaving the ancient Manchu capital away to the east. Even in 1902 the rectified or straightened track made for political reasons and only possible because China had become as clay in the potter's hands, was uncompleted, and travellers were unceremoniously dumped at a station whose name meant nothing, and from whence they had to find their way as best they could to the provincial capital over some of the worst roads in the world.

In 1903 it is different, however, and in the clear, dry atmosphere of the north, Moukden's old walls loom out very near. The re-occupation of Moukden had not yet taken place when I was there, and the little station looked very humble and insignificant. It was so odd to see this, the great Manchurian general, in a penitent mood, that I hastened to make researches and, wonder of wonders, I discovered that there were only eighteen railway guards in garrison. It was, indeed, bad to have only eighteen military uniforms at the very gates of a highly-desirable spot, but my Russian informant

pleaded extenuating circumstances—very extenuating circumstances, he insisted, giving a vague wave of the hand behind him. I looked beyond the station precincts and understood. A dozen low, barrack-like buildings stood, half-completed, a couple of hundred yards away, with yawning open spaces disturbing their profiles, and lumbered with scaffolding. Barracks had been begun on an extensive scale, but the Shantung workmen had evidently left for their homes on the approach of winter; and so there was no one left to complete them, for the Russian is helpless in an emergency.

A carter roused me from my reverie by seizing my traps, and we cantered toward the city. It is only a twenty minutes' drive to the gates, and we were soon inside. Beyond Moukden's walls, as is the case in every Chinese city, unauthorised houses and hovels have encroached much on Government land, which should be left vacant for the defence of the city, according to the old regulations. Squalid dwellings are most of these, inhabited by the poorest of the poor, and with lanes full of disgusting sights. The hand of backsheesh is to be clearly discerned in this, for even the beggar can pay something. No one, however, really cares so long as the encroachment does not harm their trade.

At Moukden's gates Chinese soldiers, armed with indifferent rifles, and worse fixed-bayonets, mount guard, and for once there is no Russian tricolour carelessly slung from crooked bamboo, waving

above. So the town, for the time being, could be accounted moderately free from the usurping Muscovite. Once inside the city, I told the carter to drive to the Russian inn of which I had been told, for I wished to test certain things, and see with Russian eyes. We rattled along, and passed street after street of newly-erected shops, gaudy with fresh paint and gilt. Moukden suffered more than any other Manchurian city when the swing of the pendulum brought retribution and the Cossacks in 1900. Whole districts were then most cleanly and thoroughly looted, and, so that afterwards no one should be able to trace the handiwork of the so-called avenger, the flaming torch was applied, and fire made to destroy all marks.

Suddenly, when I least expected it, my conveyance stopped, and the carter, sliding off the near shaft, started dusting his legs—a sure sign in the north that the journey is completed. I looked around in vain for signs of russification, but finding none, I asked what was the idea of the halt. "Idea!" snorted the carter; "can you not see the door? There it is. It is your Russian inn."

I pleaded a deficient eyesight, and gazed in wonder. The Russian hotel unmasked was the most humble thing in Manchuria. It was simply a very indifferent former Chinese business hong, with a diminutive and dirty placard slung above intimating that it was a *gastins* or inn. I got down and pushed open the door, with the result that I fell into what looked like a primitive dining-room.

Yes, it was certainly a dining-room, for there was vodka and one ancient dinner-cloth, and these are unmistakable signs.

The carter remonstrated with me for my slowness. "Here there is no ceremony; you go in and do as you please; I will shout, else no one comes." He did so, and a dirty-looking "boy" finally appeared. "No room," he said, without waiting for a question; "we have only five rooms, and several Russians are sleeping together." This was not particularly inviting, but, where the Russian is, always establish yourself first and argue afterwards. So I came in, ordered a drink, and finally unearthed the proprietor. The proprietor was mainly clothed in the inevitable long boots, in which all the righteous sleep along the railway Empire; but in spite of his primitive attire he had ideas.

"There is only my room and the table," he said, thinking aloud; "my room will be three roubles and the table two."

I selected his room, and then, to his disgust, after a very cursory inspection, changed to the table. Tables are hard, but there are worse things on earth.

Presently the hotel guests began to assemble, for it was the hour of food, and the native cook, abandoning ceremony, emerged from his kitchen and hilariously inquired of the "boy" if "the pigs proposed to eat." The Chinaman is evidently amusing himself vastly, after his coarse fashion, with the conqueror within the gates, and the amount of lost

face he has already scored up against the Muscovite to his own satisfaction is beyond counting.

"Are all here?" I inquired of the boy.

"Yes," he answered, sheltering himself in the vernacular. "There are five guests, and we really have but three rooms. It is ordered that five be the number told to strangers, so that we may appear larger." "The woman," he added, looking round, "is not here. She only sleeps."

A delightful neighbourhood this, and you will understand the class of people who overflow from the railway. I was beginning to regret my Chinese inn, for there at least an ancient civilisation exists, and the habits are somehow more pleasant.

But presently the boy gave voice to his feelings again, and spoke with the bitterness of outstanding wages. From him I learnt that Moukden is going to have an electric light, and that the posts are already up. He explained that the modest company present at the inn were in Moukden owing to this electrical scheme, and that before they had come, there had been no one for months. "Men come and look round, and then go away," he concluded. "What do the Russians do here?"

But the horror of the electric light forced me away. Horror of horrors, indeed! for what does an ancient city, with mediæval walls, drum towers, and bell towers, require of electric lights, when there are oil-paper lanterns painted in the colours of the rainbow, and a hundred other things which smack of the world when it was so unsophisticated?

Outside, the night was beautiful and calm, and the curious unreality and unrest which invade one when among the Russians in Manchuria, disappear when one moves from their presence. To-morrow was a *chieh*, or quarterly settling day, and so the streets and shops were still full of people and clerks busy calling out the tale of outstanding accounts in high-pitched voices. At the door of the inn was a soldier-watchman, of one of the newly-raised Moukden battalions with "soldier guardian of the streets" splashed across his tunic in great red characters. Two thousand men had been so far recruited in Moukden, but the soldier-watchman confessed that they were absolutely valueless.

The soldier was a Shantung man—perhaps the sturdiest race in China—and a veteran of the Japanese and Boxer wars. And he looked as if he was of the very stuff which makes armies, but withal he was armed in the absurd Chinese fashion so contemptible in this age of weapons of precision.

"If we fight here again," he said, "it will be the same old story. We have old rifles, old clothes, and only twenty cartridges each. Our officers are bad, and we could not withstand the Russians for five minutes—it is always so."

Of course, it is the same old story, and it is the super-ignorant Peking Government which is alone responsible. Men there are in limitless numbers and the willingness to fight also; it is only the weapons and the leaders that are lacking. The drilled troops of Yuan Shihkai and Tientsin may

count in the threatened war, but the poorly-armed and badly-led post-Boxer levies of Manchuria are beneath contempt.

The next day I was early afoot, for I had much to see and do. Moukden within the walls is such a baby Peking that it is child's play to cover even the longest distances within the city limits. And then Moukden has now quite an up-to-date Far Eastern convenience—the universal ricksha. Two sturdy coolies trundle you up and down and in and out of ruts with such vigour that after a few minutes you decide that the Peking cart is, after all, the best thing to use on Chinese roads *au naturel.* The northern cart is built for the ruts, and fits exactly into them, since ancestral carts made them, whereas the ricksha is an intruder, and takes care to demonstrate it to you every minute. It is to the Russian that credit is due for the introduction of the ricksha so far north; and although the occupation *régime* has at least outwardly disappeared in Moukden, the ricksha still remains, and the coolies are still armed with their former Russian licenses. I asked the coolies wonderingly why they kept the licenses. "Who knows when the Russians are coming back," answered the human draft animals. "And in any case," they concluded, "these licenses can be sold to country people who know nothing of Russian passports, and therefore they are worth keeping." Long live the Chinese commercial spirit!

I called at various places, and tried to discover in what light the American Treaty which opens

Moukden to the trade of the world was regarded by native officials. They one and all professed indifference, and treated the whole matter as a side issue. They acknowledged that it had done some good from the Chinese point of view, and had somewhat strengthened their position; but they argued that the only point of importance to them at the present moment was, after all, whether Russia was going to withdraw without fighting Japan. I was struck with one thing at all these houses. Copies of the Shanghai vernacular newspapers lay about in heaps, and one man said he subscribed to three daily newspapers. This cannot but have a great influence in determining the attitudes and actions of people in Manchuria in the event of war, for I am firmly convinced that the educating influence of the native Press—drawing inspiration mainly from the English Far Eastern publications—is alienating the Chinaman more and more from the Russian, and making him see the proposed Russian annexation in its true light. As in almost all cases, the officials and gentry in China determine the attitude of a country side; this spreading of the Anglo-Saxon idea can but have one result, and that result must be highly unfavourable to the Russian. Moukden and Kirin were separated ten years ago by immense gulfs from the rest of China in their mode of thought. To-day they feel the new influences at work even more acutely than other provincial capitals, and the old and antiquated is giving place to the new.

A Charming Manchu Girl.

After seeing these papers and thinking in this strain, it was a shock to go to the telegraph office and see white-tunicked Russian operators at work, and the dirty soldiers of some Siberian regiment hanging about idly outside. If ever men represented a backward civilisation it is these, and they must be got rid of at all costs if China is to be saved.

For although Moukden has been nominally handed back, there are still about ninety uniforms in the city. The Commissair has a Cossack guard, the Consul-General likewise one—the Russo-Chinese Bank is protected by soldiery in similar fashion, and finally, the telegraph office is still in Muscovite hands. It is true that the old Imperial Palace and the various Yamens have been cleared of soldiers, but Slav boot-leather still oppresses the air. After the 8th of April, a pretence was made of evacuating strictly according to the terms of the Protocol, but so long as the Russian is able to dominate the country from the railway with tens of thousands of men, and allows them to overflow into Chinese cities whenever the fancy may seize him, the present anomalous position, precluding any real settlement, will cause unrest to increase instead of decreasing.

I went round the various Boards and Ministries, and entered some of the buildings. Official Moukden is very much dilapidated, I regret to say, and there is a settled air of despair about the Government offices, which begins with the Governor-

General's residence and ends with the smallest police Ting'erh. In front of Viceroy Tseng Ch'i's Yamen there is a dilapidated *chevaux de frise*, and above the gate there is a tattered Dragon flag. These two archaic adornments are evidently held to be sufficient insignia for the lost dignity of a Manchu governor, for if you enter the gates, a single gate-keeper merely looks at you with lack-lustre eyes, and no one asks you your business until you are well on your way to the inner courtyards and the women's quarters. Tseng Ch'i's spirit has been broken, they say. Everybody is against Tseng Ch'i—even the Moukden Chinese—but there is something to be said after all for the poor man. You must be of a tough nature to withstand three years' bullyings and ravings unmoved. And if you have been reared in the peaceful atmosphere of a Chinese Secretariat you are ill-fitted to grapple with problems for which an immediate solution is demanded by a rough-voiced man who threatens all sorts of dire things should you prove obdurate.

So they say that Tseng Ch'i has collapsed and hauled down his colours to the Russian, and that he is now secretly intriguing with them again after he had publicly disavowed all his previous transactions. True or not, it can have but very little bearing after all on the main question, for in the year of Our Lord 1903 one man cannot betray twenty millions, and even Manchu viceroys are not omnipotent.

It is a relief to pass from the Yamens to the streets again, and be amongst the crowds that are

not so easily cowed. For the Manchurian plebs seem curiously indifferent to all these perplexing problems, and a Sunday peace is over all. What it is I do not pretend to know, but whereas Chinese officials in Manchuria are nervous and anxious, the people are not in the slightest disturbed. At Tsitsihar and Kirin I had found the same symptoms, and at Moukden they were even more apparent.

From Moukden's walls a splendid view is to be had of the surrounding country, and certain it is that the old capital lies in a pleasant land. Rolling plains covered with magnificent tilled fields surround the city, with hills in the middle distance, and mountains vaguely seen far away. A few dozen miles to the south-east are those precious roads to the Yalu, which will be the scenes of the fiercest combats if war is coming. In the Chino-Japanese war of '94 political and other considerations prevented the Mikado's soldiers from entering Moukden. In a Russian war Moukden will send its most notable men to beg delivery from the hands of bullying Commissairs and brutal Cossacks, and the opening of Moukden to Japanese soldiery will be the signal for an outburst of relief throughout the length and breadth of Manchuria.

There was nothing much more left to be seen, so I prepared to leave. A Commissair, a Consul-General, a Russo-Chinese bank, a Russified telegraph station, a so-called hotel, a few Cossacks, and two miserable provision shops, represent the Muscovite power and commercial interests in this,

Manchuria's most important provincial capital. A doleful body of Manchu and Chinese officials, and two thousand worthless Chinese braves, with indifferent crowds of common people, is the native picture. Things are merely marking time in Moukden, and war is expected. There is, in truth, not much of interest to be seen.

CHAPTER XXX

THE RUSSIAN ARMY IN MANCHURIA, AND ITS TASK.

THE Russian army in Manchuria is to most people an unknown quantity. For months, rumours that editors have crystallised into facts, have been floating about concerning the enormous strength of the Czar's army of occupation—of the countless numbers of fat battalions which everywhere abound —of the universal domination of the booted Slav— of the utter uselessness and madness to challenge his right so to do seeing that he has command of all the strategic points—and so on *ad infinitum*, until the shadow of the Colossus has become more mighty than the substance itself, and the feet of clay are quite forgotten in this vapour of words. . . For that this Colossus has feet of clay is to a large extent true, but it is not proper that these should be first discussed to the exclusion of the body and head, so let us proceed according to rule.

The Russian army invaded Manchuria in 1900 because Europe invaded Chihli, and because the moment was therefore highly propitious for the long-planned movement south. Europe, however,

had Tientsin and Peking to rescue; the Russian army had no one to save in Manchuria, for the railway construction parties and the railway guards had fled up or down the line—whichever happened to be most convenient—as soon as the Boxers appeared and the Chinese soldiery had got out of hand. But although the army had no rescuing work to perform and but little fighting to do, the Manchurian invasion was at once elevated by bureaucrats and soldiers alike to the dignity of a campaign, because it served a purpose, and thus for three long years the Manchurian army has kept its campaigning boots on its feet, and has considered itself an active force in the field.

For from the very beginning the Muscovite has known that he has been building up with bluff and myth; but so dear have Manchuria's rich plains become to him, and so great and incalculable has been his expenditure, through his own carelessness as an accountant, that he is willing to spill his blood to the last drop sooner than give up what he contemplates robbing from the rightful owners.

The great inrush of 1900, as I have already said in other places, saw practically all towns of importance in Manchuria with Russian soldiers quartered in them. From Port Arthur to Harbin more than twenty cities along the great central valleys were occupied with larger or smaller detachments, according to their importance in Russian eyes. To the east, along or near the Korean frontier, a dozen towns were similarly garrisoned.

To the south-west, from Shanhaikwan to Newchwang and right up the Western Bank of the river Liao, other important points were seized; and finally in northern Manchuria another dozen were occupied. Thus some fifty cities and towns—the most important in the three Manchurian provinces—were under the Russian heel, and the Chinese were given to understand that the occupation was destined to be permanent. This was the first part of the play.

It was not until 1901 and the general settling-down of the political and diplomatic turmoil in China, together with the signature of sundry protocols, evacuation agreements, and such-like, that the Manchurian army of occupation found its position considerably altered. Up till then post commanders had really considered that they were to remain at their garrisons for an indefinite time, until the bureaucrats had succeeded in openly taking over the country. And they thought they could assist in the great work of winning over the local Chinese by simply identifying themselves with the districts under their command as much as possible, and adopting an easy attitude of unconcern.

The strength of the Manchurian army of occupation—by which I include the garrisons of the Kuantung leased territory and Port Arthur—never totalled one hundred thousand men, even in the halcyon days of the great invasion, and in the first instance the forces were mainly distributed so as to dominate the inhabitants of the country rather than on strategic grounds.

With the signature of the evacuation instrument of April, 1902, a different attitude was immediately observed. Reasons of economy and the difficulties of efficiently carrying out the supply service for so many men had even previous to that date been responsible for a considerable reduction in the numbers of men garrisoning distant points—and the almost entire concentration within the railway area was therefore only another step in the same direction.

The Russian army did to all intents and purposes carry out the first part of the evacuation—that is the rendition of the Shanhaikwan-Newchwang Railway and of the country west of the Liao—the Liao Hsi. It was perfectly well understood at St. Petersburg that tampering with the rights of the British bondholders of the Imperial Chinese Railway would force even England to show determination, and as Japan was the most formidable enemy, Western Manchuria was abandoned as "of no strategic value." But on the 8th April, 1903, when the second movement of troops took place, there was manifest double dealing, and it is this breach of contract which first aroused the suspicion of the Japanese Government. Instead of retiring on the railway *en masse*, or leaving the country altogether, the Russian troops garrisoning Fengtien province only evacuated, so to speak, with a reservation. They moved, it is true, with great ostentation, so as to attract attention from the Far Eastern press; but even if the troops carried out the letter of the law, they took every opportunity of violating the spirit. Thus on the

Newchwang plains there was a grand "evacuation review" of seven thousand men; loud-voiced addresses were made to the rank and file by white-headed generals to the effect that Chinese territory was being handed back—that the work of the troops was finished—and that the Czar thanked his children for their devotion to duty. But in spite of all this these troops were promptly redistributed with great care along the southern section of the Central Manchurian Railway, so that they were strategically more formidable and more menacing than before. And although the great bulk of the troops left Newchwang, the so-called Russian Civil Administration of the town did not come to an end, nor were the Customs surrendered, nor did the armed Russian patrol launches come off the River Liao.

Similarly, although Moukden was evacuated, the telegraph office was retained under Russian control, and the private guards of the various Russian officials residing at the provincial capital were increased instead of being done away with. And on the great highway to Korea, Fêng-huang-ch'êng, the most important town of the eastern regions, had its garrison strengthened by the drawing in of the detached posts surrounding it; and as early as May preparations were made to test thoroughly the transport facilities of the Yalu neighbourhood. These things show how insincere Russia has been, in spite of her protestations.

As the Japanese attitude began to stand out more clearly, and the Tokyo Government showed signs

of acting quite independently of the maritime powers, the Russian military arrangements took more definite shape, and it became clear that the Port Arthur headquarters staff was ransacking its archives, and studying with great care the military lessons of the Chino-Japanese war. Having thoroughly digested this interesting history, the complete triangulation of South-eastern Manchuria, from the River Liao to the banks of the Yalu, a work which had been but indifferently attended to previously, was undertaken without delay.

The more the Russian staff pondered on it, the more they would appear to have been convinced that the Japanese objective would be the cutting of the railway somewhere between Kai-chou, in the north of the Liaotung, and a point south of Moukden. That the Russian staff early anticipated severe struggles along the road leading from the Yalu is proved by the fact that barracks crudely adapted to Russian use were made of Chinese houses at a number of points from the Hai-ch'êng station to Antung on the Yalu estuary, although they have not been as yet occupied ; and that a low estimate states that thirty thousand men could be warmly housed in these parts during the cold winter months. Indeed, it would seem, from a careful watching of troops, and from remarks let drop by officers, momentarily betrayed into indiscreet expressions of opinions, that the Russians cannot believe that any great Japanese attack can come in any way except over the Yalu, and there-

fore everything has been prepared for an overwhelming concentration along the all-important roads leading to the Korean frontier. This means to say that, until quite recently, the Russian Naval and Military staffs were of the opinion that surprise landings on the Liaotung, after the manner of the Japanese war of '94, were out of the question.

From the very first it was apparent, as the autumn drew to a close, that the 8th October—the date for the final evacuation of the provinces of Kirin and Hei-lung-chiang—had lost its significance, and that it was not even proposed to keep up appearances by marching in troops from outlying points to within the railway area. By an arrangement with certain native friends, I was able to ascertain that on the eventful day, the 8th, no movement at all took place in either Kirin or Hei-lung-chiang provinces. As a matter of fact, apart from the provincial capitals, there were practically no troops left in the two northern provinces, excepting in the very smallest numbers. Such as were stationed at outlying points had been reposted as special observation corps, and were only of sufficient strength to resist local banditti, and were not there with any idea of overawing Chinese or Manchu territorial officials.

The whole of the province of Hei-lung-chiang may, therefore, be immediately dropped from consideration, for apart from Fu-liao-tien—where the training of railway guards has been hitherto carried out on an extensive scale—the province has for months

been practically denuded of Russian troops. And in Kirin province it is, to some extent, the same story, with the exception of Harbin, Kirin city, and the Ninguta—Hun-ch'un—Possiet Bay line.

It is thus evident that in the middle of 1903 the Russian military headquarters had been informed that there was serious danger in the air, and that startling developments might be expected at any moment, and that no time should be lost in a redistribution of troops. For that Russia never intended to relinquish the military hold on the Manchurian provinces, there can be no doubt.

With a stroke of the pen, therefore, before the evacuation of Manchuria had even been nominally completed, the Russian army of occupation was openly converted into an army of defence. In other words the policy of domination—that is, the domination of the Manchurian population and officials—was changed into a policy of defence against a threatened attack from a detested and dreaded foe—Japan.

I have already said that the grand idea of the great Russian Southern concentration was the defence of the Yalu roads. But as time went on, and the defective condition of the Russian Far Eastern squadrons demonstrated more and more, the fact that Japanese surprise-landings were possible—nay, even more, probable—all along the four hundred odd miles of coast of the Liaotung peninsula, created uneasiness; and it became clear that steps must be immediately taken to provide for this contingency.

Accordingly, a number of new towns were occupied in the autumn as bases from which independent operations could be conducted in the Liaotung promontory. The principal of these towns are: Hsiu-yen, sixty miles east of Fêng-huang-ch'êng, and about the same distance from the Eastern Coast; Fu Chou, twenty-five miles off the west Liaotung coast, and facing the Gulf of Pechili; Kai-chou, nearly a hundred miles north of Fu Chou, and only a few miles from the coast; and finally some villages in the Liao estuary.

The task of the Russian army of defence, as they themselves love to call it, in southern Manchuria alone, is an extremely complex one. There are first the roads to the Yalu, then the long and dangerous Liaotung coast-line, and finally Port Arthur and the leased territory. But the Russian staff, rightly or wrongly, argues that Port Arthur and the lower end of the Kuantung leased territory are too hard for the Japanese to crack until there have been Japanese successes elsewhere. It is admitted that Port Arthur may be blockaded; but it is equally believed that the vast system of field fortifications extending from the naval stronghold to far beyond Talien Bay, together with the extremely defensible nature of the country, filled as it is with barren hills, will preclude any serious attempt being made at the outset to attack it from the land side.

The two areas of interest in the event of war breaking out would, therefore, appear to be the Yalu-Fêng-huang-ch'êng regions and the coast-line

of upper Liaotung. Until these are successfully invaded, the railway will not be in any danger.

But it appears, also, that the Russian staff has foreseen that it might be forced to sacrifice the southern section of the Central Manchurian Railway in the early stages of a war, for it would be months before the full strength of the Russian army available for service in the Far East could be concentrated in Manchuria. Provision has been made for the loss of what I will call the Liaotung stretch of track, say the section between the Kuantung fortified lines and some point south of Moukden—and this loss will not greatly affect Russian plans.

The latest calculations of the Japanese headquarters staff estimate that the greatest number of trained soldiers Russia can place in the field in the Far East without dangerously reducing the home garrisons and exposing the European frontiers to immediate peril, is five hundred and twenty thousand men. And the highest authorities agree that many months must elapse before this force can be transported by rail to the Far East. But from this number must be deducted, first, the forces Russia, according to the most painstaking estimate, had on the 1st November in Manchuria and Kuantung—89,000 men ; second, the troops of the Amur military province, 48,000 men ; thirdly, the troops which have been moving into Manchuria at the rate of 2,500 a week by rail quite recently ; and fourthly, the expected reinforcements coming by sea, 8,000 men. The Far Eastern forces which Viceroy

Alexeieff should have under his command on the 1st January, 1904, should read as follows:—

In Manchuria and Kuantung	89,000	men.
Amur Military province . .	48,000	,,
Reinforcements by land . .	22,500	,,
Local reservists	40,000	,,
Coming by sea	8,000	,,
Grand Total . . .	207,500	,,

It will therefore be seen that almost exactly four tenths of the available Russian troops will be at hand at the very outset of hostilities, and that the remaining 315,000 men must be transported to the scene of warfare over a single line of railway five thousand miles in length.

An interesting question at once arises as to whether the rolling stock of the Siberian and Manchurian railways is sufficient to transport such a vast army of men without breaking down under the strain, and further, whether the provisioning for half a million of men so far away from home is possible.

Although it seems presumptuous to make a definite answer to these all-important questions, certain arguments can be advanced which throw considerable light. In the first place, until April and May the ice on Lake Baikal is sufficiently strong to bear all train weights, and therefore the laying of rails across the lake would enable an indefinite number of military trains to steam straight from European Russia into Manchuria. That

Russia commands an unlimited supply of rolling stock suitable for military purposes on her European lines is a fact well established, and if these can travel without a break from one end of the Empire to the other, a great difficulty will be removed, and the risks of blocking the lines will be diminished. The enormous length and the multitude of the sidings along the Siberian and Manchurian railways is one of the most noticeable features of these great strategic works, for every twenty versts or so there is room for at least a dozen trains to be halted, and the line completely cleared. There seems, therefore, but little doubt that the actual work of transporting the additional three hundred thousand odd men is a task which could be successfully accomplished. And now we come to the second point—the provisioning of half a million of men.

It is useless to refer to text books and argue that the single track is quite unable to perform that task; for the railway would never be called on to perform such impossible work. Once the half million have been successfully transported to the theatre of war, Manchuria alone is equal to the task of providing most of the foodstuffs. For flour, meat, greenstuffs, and tea are available in enormous quantities, and it is not unwise to say that these Manchurian supplies are practically inexhaustible if properly tapped. To-day the Harbin mills practically supply eighty thousand Russian mouths, and half a million Chinese, with their flour, and the exigencies of the military situation could immediately demand this

MOUKDEN SLUMS, BEYOND THE WALLS.

entire output. Apart from this, the commandeering of all the native flour mills in Manchuria would provide additional supplies of a lower-grade stuff.

But there are other points. Cattle are available, sheep are available, eatable black pigs in vast droves are to be found everywhere; and from the near-lying Eastern Mongolian plains, unlimited live stock can be driven in to supplement Manchuria's own supplies. Nor is this all. Many kinds of coarse grains, such as kao-liang, or tall millet, hsiao-mi, or small millet, and Indian corn, are to be had in practically endless quantities. An outburst of hostilities would see the vast winter caravan trade of the interior stopped at once, and if the Russians acted sagely, they would thus have an unexcelled transport service available locally. I have already referred to the extraordinary vigour of Manchurian draft animals. Harnessed to clumsy carts, and forced to travel over some of the worst roads in the world, Manchurian ponies and mules do not understand the word exhaustion, and day after day, week after week, they can travel seemingly unharmed by fatigue, whilst hauling immense burdens. Bred in a cold, healthy climate, standing summer and winter in rain or snow-storm, out in the open there is no animal in the world which can surpass them in toughness and courage; and with the hundreds of thousands of these animals that are available the mobility of the Russian army in the field should be very great.

It, therefore, would seem apparent that, provided

nothing unforeseen happens, Russia should be both able to transport to Manchuria and the Primorsk, and feed without insuperable difficulties the half million men she can place in the field in the Far East. Clothing, medical stores, munitions of war, and the thousand miscellaneous things an army requires, should prove no great tax to transport by rail. And, in addition to this, with the aid of local transport, the armies in the field should possess great mobility. If operations extend to Central Manchuria, that great waterway, the Sungari, will become a potent factor, providing independent communication, as it does, between the Amur and Harbin. That if hard pressed, a return will be made to the Napoleonic policy by the Russians, and war made to feed war, cannot be doubted when their cynicism is considered; and perhaps no better country in the world could be chosen than Manchuria.

But the Russians are fully alive to the dangers which would immediately menace them, if by coercive measures they further antagonise a population already hostile. It is to be, therefore, doubted whether the earlier stages of a war would witness any wholesale commandeering or seizure of native supplies. It would only be in the event of crushing reverses that reason and discretion would be cast to the winds, and such a harmful policy, which would really be the beginning of the end, inaugurated. Indeed, it would appear that should the war be unduly prolonged the crux may be the attitude of

the native population, for on Manchuria's inhabitants will largely depend the mighty question of food supplies, transport, intelligence work, and labour.

But the reader will ask how it can be stated, in one breath, so to speak, that the population of Manchuria is openly hostile to the Muscovite ; and that yet, in spite of this, Russia's success largely depends on her ability to induce cooperation from these hostile Chinese ? I can and do state this, because, although the bulk of the native population of Manchuria detests the Muscovite and favours the Japanese, there are many thousands and even tens of thousands of Chinese who, so long as the Peking Government remains neutral, will be eager to earn the huge profits war always offers. Thus, supposing Russian commanders were empowered to hire native carts at double rates and pay so much down for every carter killed or injured, tens of thousands of desperate characters would come forward, and there would be plenty of native contractors to find draft animals and waggons. Similarly, by expending large sums Chinese dealers can be found who would accumulate foodstuffs by the ten thousand tons at points beyond the actual area of active warfare, for there are Chinese who would be willing to go to the gates of hell and beyond, providing the game is worth the candle and that spot cash is the reward. And the men who will supply these traitors will be the Mahommedans. There is a very big Chinese Mahommedan population in Manchuria which has

emigrated there at different times from the back provinces of China—principally from Kansuh and Shansi. During the Japanese war the Mahommedans helped the invaders, and so treacherous are they generally that there is a Manchurian saying that where there are ten Mahommedans there are nine thieves. With such aids the Russians can do much.

Glancing at what has been written, the reader may be inclined to imagine that Russia in Manchuria will be a terrible enemy for the Japanese to tackle, and that the chances of permanent success are not very great. But conclusions should not be too hastily arrived at, for there is much yet to discuss.

I have already indicated the extent of Russian preparations in Southern Manchuria, and have stated that on the 1st of January there should be in Chinese provinces: first the Manchurian and Kuantung active garrisons, 89,000 men; second, 22,500 men in reinforcements arrived by land; third, 8,000 men by sea; and to this number should be added the reservists in the Trans-Amur liable to be called up for service in Manchuria—say another 10,000 men. The number, therefore, Russia should have on that date in Chinese territory, leased or coveted, is roughly 130,000 men. But from this number something should be deducted in order to be on the safe side. We will therefore assume the total of 120,000 men as the effective striking force in Manchuria. At first sight this would seem a formidable mass of men, but a close examination of its

distribution—its varied duties and the great areas which have to be covered—tends to convince one of the total inadequacy of this force, leaving entirely apart for the time being the all-important question of efficiency.

Taking first the fortified lines of the Kuantung leased territory—that is, the Port Arthur-Talienwan area—the force actually available in the event of war suddenly breaking out would be under 45,000 men. Great stress has been laid by some writers on the strength of Port Arthur and its absolute impregnability now that the natural strength of the place has been so materially added to by artificial means. But these writers in their haste to prove their point have forgotten many things, the most important being that it is not alone the narrow limits of Port Arthur that have to be protected, but also the strategic area extending north even of Talienwan, and that Russian sloth has left many things undone which should have been done many years ago. For instance, to take but a small case, on the west coast of the heel of the Kuantung territory and only four miles outside Port Arthur is a bay called Pigeon Bay, with deep water right up to the foreshore. The surrounding hills mask the bay most effectually, and yet it was only in September of 1903 that forts Nos. 13 and 14 commanding this vital point were begun, and although night and day work has been proceeding ever since, the forts were not completed in November nor were the guns mounted.

Small things like this forecast some of the terrible shortcomings which this war must show up. The best authorities agree that to be really impregnable these Kuantung fortified lines require 80,000 men, and there seems little doubt that should the railway be cut in the earlier stages of a war such a number will never be available.

The next area to be examined is a very large one, but in view of the fact that, unless Japanese land operations are unduly prolonged, the independent bases I have already mentioned, established along the upper Liaotung territory, can never be properly completed nor sufficient forces massed at them, I propose not to stop and consider them in detail, but to deal immediately with the area of the Yalu highways.

Using the Liaoyang-Hai-ch'êng districts as basis, the forces which Russia should have available along these roads cannot exceed 40,000 men for many weeks. The distance from Liaoyang to the Yalu, by road, is roughly, one hundred and fifty miles, or a week's march ; and although, as I have already said, everything has been prepared along the road that possibly can be prepared, terrible confusion must result when a general forward movement commences, for the transport question will immediately become a vital one. It is useless to give figures at the present moment, but still it is safe to say that, so far, there are only a few thousand men between the Yalu and the railway. The main object of concentration on the Yalu is merely to gain time for

reinforcements to be poured into the country from European Russia; and every day gained means many men added to Russia's striking power. The Russian staff argues that the Japanese generals will display the greatest caution in their first contact with European armies, and that therefore comparatively small forces may succeed in delaying overwhelming Japanese armies for a very long time.

But there seems little reason to suppose that Japan will act only across the Yalu. The Liaotung surprise landings and the confusion into which they would throw the Russian staff arrangements are too tempting to be lightly abandoned, and once Japanese armies land north of the Kuantung leased territory, on either the east or west coasts of the Liaotung, the Russian forces concentrated on the roads leading to the Yalu will be dangerously threatened on their flank. Their *raison d'être* will have ceased to exist, and a gradual retreat on to Hai-ch'êng or Liaoyang will be almost certain.

But the landing of the Japanese on the Liaotung coasts will have another terror. It will inevitably mean the eventual cutting of the railway, the isolation of Kuantung, and the splitting up of Russian armies.

Whether or not the Kuantung fortified lines are in a position to sustain a prolonged investment is a question which, with the imperfect data available, it is somewhat foolish to discuss. But it is not clear why Japan should sacrifice many thousands of men in desperate assaults until the reduction of

the Russian fortress and the outlying field works becomes a military or political necessity. So long as Port Arthur and the surrounding territory are cut off and completely isolated from the outside world, the Japanese armies of the Liaotung could give their undivided attention to the Russian forces, which would then be spread in a vast line from Hai-ch'êng to Newchwang. Here, it is therefore not unwise to suppose, as was the case in the late Chino-Japanese war, the greatest and fiercest struggles will be fought, and here the fate of southern Manchuria decided. That the Japanese task will be no mean one is clear when one remembers that Russian reinforcements can be poured in from the north in the greatest numbers.

Japanese successes in southern Manchuria will inevitably lead to fresh moves being undertaken elsewhere. Apart from the outflanking of the Russian forces concentrated in the Liaoyang-Hai-ch'êng regions by the landing of independent armies west of the Liao—that is, west of Newchwang—there is an entirely new line of the country to be considered. It is the Russian Pacific province, or the Primorsk. A few miles south of Vladivostock and directly opposite to Hakodate is Possiet Bay. And a few miles from Possiet lie the north-eastern frontier of Korea and the Tiumen River. A stone's throw from here is Chinese territory, for the eastern frontier of Kirin province ends practically on the sea-coast. Chinese Hun-ch'un, the fortress town which stood sentinel opposite the Cossack

outposts before the Boxer war, is now in Russian hands and weakly guards a most important highway. The strategic importance of these regions can hardly be overestimated. Only forty-eight hours' steam from Japan's northernmost strong place, Hakodate, the Mikado's generals could effect a surprise landing here at any moment after the winter ice has broken up, and from Possiet Bay mobile forces could be pushed *viâ* Ninguta into the very heart of Kirin province and create the most terrible confusion. For no more convenient place could be chosen to effect a three-fold object—to cut off Vladivostock from communication with Manchuria ; to menace Harbin on the flank ; and to strike the Russian south Manchurian forces in the rear.

The forces Russia has at her disposal at the present moment to meet such an attack are difficult to estimate, for they are very widely distributed ; but here again, as has been shown is the case in the south, it may be said that they are totally inadequate for the task which would await them. The extreme vulnerability of Russia's entire position in the Far East, from the Japanese point of view, becomes more striking the more one examines the question of attacks on the coasts of the Pacific province.

The estimated number of troops available in time of war in the Amur military province is roughly 70,000 men, and on this force the defence of the Primorsk devolves. But it is right to state that these numbers must be heavily discounted if it is wished only to include the really effective force available.

Examination would tend to show that many units are, after the Chinese manner, merely paper estimates that do not really exist. For instance, the so-called Cossack reserves of the military colonies in the Ussuri districts are returned at far too high a figure ; reservists who should be at hand in other parts of the Amur military province have in many cases notoriously " emigrated " elsewhere ; and the districts comprised in this vague term, " the Amur military province," stretch right from the upper waters of the Amur to Vladivostock, and therefore are of too enormous an area to allow effective concentration to be undertaken at threatened points until it is too late. With 20,000 men locked up in Vladivostock, and thousands scattered along the banks of the Amur, it is difficult to suppose that Russia would be in a position for many months to take the field in great force in either eastern Kirin or southern Primorsk, and every blow dealt by Japan in southern Manchuria would help to hasten the disorganisation and confusion into which the Russian forces would immediately fall on the outbreak of war.

I have in the above shown some of the possibilities of a Manchurian war, and have attempted in a general way to give the disposition of the Russian army of defence. Each day sees fresh shifting of troops, and battalions and squadrons changing ground in the most surprising manner. But, in spite of this, war will not disturb plans of campaign already settled on, and therefore it may be presup-

posed the general idea will remain the same. It is now time to speak of the composition of the army in Manchuria, its quality and probable condition in time of war ; and, having due regard for what 1900 clearly showed, some interesting deductions may be made.

The first thing a general study of the Russian army in Manchuria would seem to reveal is the great inequality in the standard of efficiency among the different corps. Some corps are good, others indifferent, and the ordinary Siberian line regiments distinctly bad.

To begin with, there would appear to be no doubt that the artillery is the best arm, and that the gunners have an entirely different morale to the rest of the army. Even the Trans-Baikal and eastern Siberian corps, which have supplied all the artillery in Manchuria until now, and are rated inferior to the European Russian batteries, have numbers of picked men drawn from Europe. Then the guns are excellent and well cared for ; many batteries have the new quick-firers ; the officers are recruited from a better class of society than those of the cavalry and infantry regiments, and the gunners themselves infinitely superior in intelligence to the rank and file of the army. The number of Jews in the Port Arthur garrison and field artillery is quite noticeable, and inquiries elicited the fact that, as these men show greater aptitude than the ordinary Russian, in spite of religious and racial prejudice they are eagerly drafted into what is a picked arm.

Artillery practice is very constant; good results promptly noted and rewarded, and everything done to promote efficiency. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the Siberian artillery should be well served and should be able to give a good account of itself.

The engineers are rather an unknown quantity, and it is therefore hard to pass an opinion on them. Given their own time and a free hand, they would seem to be able to accomplish good results, but, although they have great technical knowledge, it is to be anticipated that emergencies will find them unequal to their tasks. The greatest Russian fault is that theory constantly invades the field of practice, and that whereas in the drawing-room there is nothing the Russian engineer cannot accomplish, when it comes to carrying out what he has planned, gross mistakes are inevitably made by him.

Coming next to the cavalry, there can be but little doubt that the Siberian Cossack regiments are very indifferent corps. The great admixture of Buriat cavalrymen in those corps which come from the extensive Baikal regions can have but unfortunate results. The Mongol Buriat is a cur, and has too much of the Tartar in him to be of use in this age. A single squadron of British dragoons could ride through a division of these degenerates and sweep them like dry leaves off the field. The equipment of these Siberian cavalry corps is bad—they are armed with a clumsy sword and a short carbine; their discipline is very indifferent, and has

been much impaired by three years in Manchuria; and although they have proved useful in previous Asiatic warfare, it cannot be doubted that they will be of very little use against the Japanese, who are simply diminutive Prussians in the field. Unless, therefore, strong reinforcements of European cavalry arrive speedily, the Japanese deficiency in mounted men will not be very severely felt. The Cossack's great pride is that he can forage so successfully that he feeds both himself and his horse where others would speedily starve. This may be very useful in small punitive expeditions in Central Asia, but it is difficult to see how it will help in a great war conducted on European principles. The condition to which the real Cossack cavalry from the Don and other regions were reduced in the Turkish war is notorious, and in Manchuria, unless great care is taken, the disorganisation will be even worse.

Coming at length to the infantry—the arm which must decide a Japanese war—everyone agrees that the Siberian infantry of the line is not famous, no matter in what light you regard it. It is not generally known that, with the exception of the sharpshooter battalions, the Russian infantryman's rifle and bayonet never part company; in other words, that fixed bayonets are invariable. This custom has been explained to me, but I have forgotten its origin. It is hard in this age of straight shooting to account for a clinging to an old idea, for, although Russian officers strenuously insist that

their men shoot equally well with their bayonets fixed, I am unwilling to believe that such can be the case, and every marksman will be inclined to agree with me. Then the Russian bayonet is unusually long—twenty inches, I believe—and, apart from everything else, this slovenly custom tends to make men neglect the cleanliness of their rifle. On half-a-dozen occasions I have been able to approach close enough to battalions paraded for inspection in Manchuria to see accurately, and the indifferent condition of the rifles was very noticeable. Rust and dust means nothing even in the piping time of peace to the Russian, and damaged sights are quite common. It is all a part of that fatal "nichevo" which has overturned empires before now, and which will bring Russia very near to Avernus unless she speedily reforms.

As a weapon the Russian rifle is good, and the man behind it is no coward. Indeed the Siberian infantryman is a very sturdy fellow, and what he lacks in intelligence, military education, and equipment he certainly makes up for in fortitude and physique. In no other country in the world is such good material placed in the hands of the drill sergeant as in Russia, if breadth of chest and long clean limbs are considered. At a rough estimate, I should say that the average chest-measurement of the Russian soldier is nearer forty inches than anything else, and the rough usage he can stand is incredible. A plate of soup from the military kitchen-waggon and a hunk of rye bread are his

daily lot, he sleeps wherever he can, and yet he appears to thrive well on his *régime* and to need nothing else. The loose tunic, the baggy trousers, and the top-boots are good campaigning kit; and the Russian soldier, like the dog, has merely to shake himself when he gets up, to be ready for the day's work.

As for the railway guards, or frontier guards—call them whichever you like—it is as well to say that, although they are a separate organisation numbering 22,500 men, war will see them grouped in battalions shoulder to shoulder with their comrades of the line regiments, losing their distinctive character. I have therefore treated them as part of the general army.

But, although there is this excellent material, there can be no doubt that the Russian line officer's education is sadly neglected and that he is not a fit leader for his sheep-like men. And it is even more to be feared that the Russian staff will not use these stout soldiers to their best advantage. In the Russian army a staff officer begins and ends on the staff and is specially trained from the very earliest days of his career for no other work. The staff, being thus specially recruited, is composed of a caste of men who look with contempt on the ordinary officer, and there would appear to be altogether too much theory and too little practice in their methods. There is also liable to be a lack of uniformity and cohesion in their plans, and a constant exhibition of extraordinary jealousy and

rivalry. In 1900 some of the generals quarrelled so constantly and bitterly that cooperation was out of the question, and if they had been really called upon to face a resolute enemy some strange things would have been witnessed. And in 1900 the one great feat of Russian battalions was simply their marching capacity. The performance of the Stretensk battalion, which marched 600 versts through barren country to Tsitsihar accompanied only by its own transport was certainly very remarkable.

Then again the Russian staff, although it outwardly professes to worship the Moltke spirit, is really incapable of that ice-cold action, leaving nothing to chance and working things down to their very last detail, which it pretends to admire so in theory. The Russian would seem to be too imaginative to make an ideal leader of men. He is too subject to moods ; to great exaltation and enthusiasm, or to gloomy despair. If things go right he longs to shout that his manifest destiny is fulfilling itself —that he is already on the equator—that no one can resist him. But, on the other hand, once his plans are upset, he gives way to the blackest pessimism.

These things duly considered, it would seem that a war with Japan should be productive of great surprises. For the Japanese have a Prussian-like precision in their military organisation, which is the very reverse of the actual condition of the Russian forces. The happy-go-lucky cavalry charge of the young Kellerman which won the battle of Marengo

for Napoleon appeals to the Muscovite much more than the machine-like strategy of Moltke on the days preceding Königgrätz and Sedan. And although the Russians profess to admire Kitchener, and have studied his South African tactics with care, they will only imitate such things on the Chinese Eastern Railway as a last resource.

The army of Manchuria realises that it has a great task in front of it, but the more serious men in its ranks are not over-confident of early victories. Indeed, officers freely state that if the present forces succeed in blocking the Japanese for a few months they will be quite content ; for by that time armies from Russia will have concentrated in central Manchuria and will be able to take up a fierce offensive. The Russian military laugh at the idea that they would remain content with victories in Manchuria. The ultimate invasion and conquest of Korea are already talked of. . . .

Should this idea of a strict defensive until the arrival of the great European reinforcements be carried out, it is likely that the spade will play a very great part for many weeks in Manchuria, and that Plevna and Osman Pasha will have their Far Eastern counterparts. And if it comes to heavy spade work, there is no man as capable as the Russian. He digs up half a field with a single stroke, for digging is one of the four things every man of the lower orders excels in—especially those from Siberia. Horse-management, chorus-singing, and timber-felling are the other three.

Many people suppose that Port Arthur will fall and the war then end. I cannot hold this opinion, nor does any one who has mixed with the Russians in Manchuria. Indeed, it would seem that the destruction of the Russian fleet and the seizure of the Kuantung territory will simply be the preliminary hammer-strokes of the God Mars, and that the great war will only then commence in earnest. For there is no reason why Russia should call *pax* at such a moment, granting for the sake of argument that things go against her at the beginning, unless the internal condition of her own vast territories makes such a course a political necessity. But is it likely that internal upheavals will occur whilst a great war is proceeding? I think not, for God and the Czar are still very powerful cries, even in these socialist days, and they should arouse more enthusiasm under adversity than in ordinary times.

The war, therefore, should be of absorbing interest, and without parallel in modern times. It should be a long war rather than a short war, and the results eminently epoch-making. That the Japanese will fight to the bitter end seems quite certain, but it is not unlikely that the end will be financial exhaustion with vast armies entrenched opposite one another.

The Russian army is a picturesque thing in spite of all its faults, and notwithstanding the fact that it serves a cruel and despotic Government; and, being one of the few picturesque things remaining in this age of steel, all who know it are sentimentally

attached to it. Its parade uniforms are magnificent, and its deep-voiced shouts of greeting to its generals when they approach are dramatic, blood-stirring, and pin the imagination. Then there are no men who look so barbarically handsome on parade as the Russians; and there is nothing which brings one somehow so close as they to Napoleon and his grand armies—his gallant hussars riding across Europe—his battlefields with their suns of happy augury, and all those things without which the history of the nineteenth century would be dull.

You have only to enter a prosaic post train in Manchuria at night for mystery in uniform to spring up, and for you to be shot back a whole century. Your door will inevitably open, and an officer of the railway guards probably appear. His corps is not distinguished, and it has a name that savours of the puffing engine, but still his appearance is entrancing. He has a high astrakhan cap with a blue top, across which are worked arabesque designs in gold braid; a green, gold, and black uniform, with magnificent sword-belt and enormous pistols; and his moustaches are inevitably very big. You do not know, or want to know, who he is, for it is enough to suppose him Brigadier Gerard in the flesh or Michael Strogoff, courier of the Czar, engaged on some obscure mission. . . . He looks so picturesque and romantic that you are satisfied with what your imagination tells you. Then the eternal feminine is so constant when he is about that the mystery very soon deepens. He may sit an hour,

possibly two hours, alone, but that is all. Then another door must open, and out of that door must come a youthful lady with a lace shawl over her head, or the heavens will fall in. She will inquire something equally mysterious in whispered Russian—and instantly you will see the whole thing in a flash, for your imagination would never abandon you at such a crucial moment. The picturesque one has certainly killed and eaten the fair lady's husband, and is now fleeing with her to carve out an eastern empire for her under burning skies, where they will be far away from the Manchurian crisis! . . . You can invent story after story ; pile romance on top of romance without an effort—for the truest word about the Russian officer is that woman is his idol, and to ruin himself for her sake his natural fate.

Thus the Muscovite has been up till now necessary for the back of the canvas. We are all crying out against him, but still we would not like to see him wholly disappear. He has violated sacred pledges, outraged time and natural development in Manchuria, usurped, caroused, raped, looted, massacred, and is held up all the world over as anti-progress incarnate. But in spite of all this, at the back of one's traditional hatred and all that, there is a little something which fastens the imagination. For is there not in every one's imagination burning Moscow and Napoleon gloomily retreating over the bridge—the vast snow-covered plains, the hungry Cossacks snapping behind ? And later on, Shipka Pass, and Skobeleff

tearing off his decorations with insane oaths after frantic assaults on Plevna. All these things come to one at the very last moment, and make one hesitate before wishing his extermination in one frantic roll of words—as I now should do, to be consistent.

So with the Japanese war before one, we can only discreetly and soberly hope for the *status quo ante*, and allow the prodigal to work out his own destiny as it has already been doubtless decreed by the high gods above.

CHAPTER XXXI

OUTRAGED NEWCHWANG

I HAVE left Newchwang to the last, because it is the greatest outrage of all—because here more than anywhere else England and Englishmen have been treated by the usurping Power as negligible quantities, and because if war comes and the need arises for us to fulfil our obligations to our ally, it is the spot above all others whither Anglo-Indian contingents should be directed.

Newchwang was opened to the trade of the world by the Tientsin Treaty of 1858, ratified two years later in Peking after the chastisement of the northern capital for the first time. In May, 1861, the British settlement was established, and the new *régime* began.

Up till the advent of the British Consul, the British merchant, and the foreign customs—the outward and visible signs in China of the open door—oversea Manchurian trade had been very trifling, and, in fact, may be said to have been non-existent. Communication was principally maintained by land with the northern provinces and with

Peking, and the junks engaged in Chinese inter-port trading were numbered merely in dozens. The proper name for the treaty port is not Newchwang, although I shall continue to call it so, but Ying-tzu, or Ying-k'ou, meaning the military station or military port, and when the pioneer Englishmen arrived the town and population were represented by a few mud forts after the Taku type, with some decadent soldiery garrisoning them. Newchwang is really an inland town, thirty miles from the open port. Of trade there was but little sign in the pioneer days, although the Canton guilds interested in a number of Manchuria's products had some years previously opened native hongs.

In forty years the scene has changed vastly. Where formerly was nothing but muddy desolation, to-day a whole town has grown up surrounded by dense forests, not of growing trees, but of countless junk masts. The British settlement straggles along the left bank of the river Liao, and behind and below is the native town. Dreary flat plains surround Newchwang on every side, where salt-making is the only industry, but within the town and along the river banks all is frantic bustle. The Liao is a muddy, pea-soupy river, with treacherous bars at its mouth, but it is the sort of river which spells riches in China, for Chinese trade loves muddy waters more than anything else. Down the river, therefore, comes all Manchuria's wealth for export abroad, and the handling of it all belongs to Newchwang. Prosaic beans constitute that wealth; not beans in

hundreds of tons or thousands of tons, but beans by the hundred thousand ton, so that in the eight short months during which the port is free from ice the total which arrives there does not fall far short of a million tons.

The native city is thick with bean-cake mills, which press out the precious bean-oil from the beans and convert the refuse into massive cakes weighing from forty to seventy pounds each. From Newchwang the oil and the bean-cakes find their way over the whole of the Far East—the former being an essential in the Chinese kitchen, and the latter the richest fertiliser known for sugar-cane fields. Since the war of '94–'95 Japan has become an ever-increasing purchaser of these products, and now bids fair with her gold prices to drive all other buyers away.

All this great export trade did not spring up at once, and long years of patient endeavour were necessary to find both the buying and selling markets. When the first beginnings were made in the sixties, the Taipings were devastating Central China, and the provinces being unable to make good their customary contributions for the Manchurian military, the local Governors became too weak to even maintain a semblance of order. Robber bands raided far and wide—the Newchwang Custom House had to arm and equip a guard of sixty men ; the British Consul ordered the barricading of the little settlement, and life, if exciting, was rather miserable. Not much trade with such conditions.

Slowly things got better, however, and the Chinese, recognising the advantages accruing to trade from the extension of the open-port system to Newchwang, began to collect at the solitary Manchurian port in ever-growing numbers. Steam communication brought sister-ports in China that had been hopelessly far away in the old junk-days, within a few dozen hours of the Liao, and Manchuria was ransacked far and wide for cargo which could be now so promptly converted into solid sycee. A growing export trade meant a growing import business. Where once rough native cloths were universally used, now English and American piece-goods have come into increasing use. Each new article figuring in the export list demanded another in return from the trading foreigner, and so rapid and wonderful has been the increase that in the thirty-eight years from the opening of the port to 1899—the year of excellence of China trade—the commerce of the port has risen from practically nothing to nearly ten millions sterling per annum, a truly colossal result all things considered.

1899 brings us conveniently to 1900, which was a year of much dismal meaning for Newchwang. The Boxer storm broke locally in the early days of July. The community, consisting of a couple of dozen merchants and their clerks, the dozen pilots who bring the steamers across the muddy bars, the Customs and the Consular staffs, mustered about sixty-five able-bodied men, mainly Englishmen. June had been a terrible month, with vague

unconfirmed rumours pouring in. The Boxers were tearing up rails in Chihli—the Taku forts captured —Tientsin beleaguered—Seymour cut off—Peking, Heaven alone knew in what state—everything topsy-turvy. So the men in Newchwang sullenly took down their rifles, cleaned them, and built barricades. Although quiet reigned for the time being, it was after all merely luck, and anything might happen at any moment. The Indian Mutiny was thought of and the women shipped off, but although retreat down the river was still possible, not a single man stirred.

It finally came in July. The Boxers had been fast collecting and recruiting locally, and when they deemed themselves strong enough they advanced to the attack. The volunteers' rifles cracked off, the invulnerable Boxers were pierced by the dozen, and the first attack degenerated into precipitate flight. A handsome young chief in gaudy blood-red regalia was captured, tied to a wall, and summarily shot to discourage the others. Skirmishing parties, three and four strong, climbed over the barricades and killed every armed Chinaman they met. It does not read pleasantly, but it was eminently satisfactory. In this way the community defended itself, and for its conduct was betrayed by the British authorities.

Shortly after these events a Russian gunboat steamed into Newchwang, and the commander asked permission of the British Consul to land his men to protect a settlement that knew how to

protect itself. The Consul promptly assented—some say through weakness, some because of red-tape instructions. In any case, no matter what the reason be, Russian sailors were landed, and from that day Newchwang lost its liberty.

It appears that the Allied Commanders at Tientsin had really agreed that Russia should have charge of the restoration of order in Manchuria, and that Newchwang was included in that term; for they did not know that where Englishmen are they can take care of themselves, and that Newchwang had already repulsed the enemy. Had there been a British Consul of backbone, the Russian sailors would never have landed in the British settlement, nor would the tricolour have been hoisted. It is pleasant to learn that at the present moment the British Government is still fighting the British community on the subject of whether they are entitled to the China war medal of 1900 or not for their spirited defence of life and property, and that Downing Street is apparently more interested in depriving its own nationals of a just reward than in ejecting the Russian.

No sooner had the sailors landed in 1900 than Cossacks and white-coated infantrymen began to arrive. After a brief rest, the infantry marched into the Chinese city and the cavalry swept out on to the arid plains beyond, waiting for the inevitable to happen. Within half an hour the Chinese population, frantic with terror, rushed into the open to escape the infantrymen's bayonets. The Boxers

had discreetly left days before, and so there were only old men, women, and children to butcher —people who offered no resistance, but sank to the ground with shrill shrieks of horror when they realised their fate.

The cavalry waited until the thousands of fugitives were bunched up in huge crowds on the plains and then swooped down on them. With long swords drawn they rode through and through and hacked them to pieces by the hour, and when evening came there was a brutal sight such as has been seldom witnessed. I will not torture the tender-hearted with aching details, but I finish by saying that it was this heartless massacre which has been called the battle of Newchwang, and is advanced by the Russians as the right they have to be in Newchwang—the right of conquest. There was no resistance, no real fighting, in 1900; but, in spite of this, the British Government accepted the Russians' explanation, and allowed the establishment of the so-called Russian Civil Administration. Had Admiral Seymour been empowered to detach a small torpedo-boat to steam rapidly from Taku to Newchwang—a distance of two hundred miles—the Newchwang question would never have arisen; for two dozen brawny blue-jackets shoulder to shoulder with the sixty-five residents would have held the foreign settlement against all comers and forestalled subsequent Russian moves.

No sooner was the submission of the native population effected than it became clear that Russia

had come to stay. A guard was placed over the Newchwang Custom House, the northern tricolour was hoisted everywhere, and the officials were given to understand that the local revenues were to be impounded.

The English Commissioner of Customs cabled for instructions to his chief when Peking had been relieved; described the completeness of the Russian usurpation; hinted at the Russian reign of terror, and ended by saying that the situation was impossible. As a result of this, towards the end of August, the Deputy Inspector-General of Customs arranged with Admiral Alexeieff a temporary *modus vivendi* at Tientsin, which may be summarised in a single sentence: the Russian Administration to impound and hold in trust the Newchwang revenues until such time as a Peace Protocol had been signed, and a general evacuation of the invading European armies agreed on.

With document to this effect in his pocket, the Russian Civil Administrator of Newchwang, an official who had usurped the functions of the local Chinese territorial authorities, proceeded gaily to work, and each day saw him consolidate the Russian power on foundations of English making. The British Consul looked on hopelessly, explained to his nationals that he could do nothing, and let the plot thicken. The Customs were provided with a hybrid flag, which they were peremptorily ordered to fly on all their boarding gigs and launches, the half Russian and Chinese flag, which

is the Standard Royal of conquest of the Russo-Chinese Bank and Chinese Eastern Railway, and a veritable torture to the eye. Perhaps the tragic-groteseque of the blend of Manchu and Muscovite in the three eastern provinces is more aptly portrayed by this strange flag than anything else.

With the spring of 1901 came big launches built in Shanghai, which were promptly armed with light machine guns, and told off to patrol the river Liao and impress the natives with the permanence of the Russian *régime*. The native Likin station—locally called the West Customs—which had been abandoned by the Chinese in 1900 and never reoccupied, was now taken over by the Civil Administrator, and the Newchwang Commissioner of Customs was asked to detach men to undertake the collection. Not content with this, the Administrator painted characters over the gateway to the effect that this was the Imperial Russian Customs, established by Imperial orders, and the wording adopted by him was such as to give native traders the idea that the Imperial authority referred to was the Czar's and not that of the Dragon Throne.

The vast junk trade of the Liao, employing some 25,000 junks of twenty ton burthen, was about to commence with the melting of the ice in the spring of the second year of usurpation, and the Russians did not intend to lose an income—the Likin income—amounting to half a million taels yearly, nor did they wish the junk-men to suppose that any authority but their own was worth listening to. Yet the

Russian Government had to beg men of Sir Robert Hart's service to collect for them what they had not the competence to manage themselves. It is at Newchwang that the Russians have had their only success in the whole of Manchuria at revenue collecting, and that success has only been possible because they have been able to borrow machinery of British make.

The trade and revenues of Newchwang being indirectly controlled through enforced co-operation, attention was given to the native town. The Taotai and his staff had never dared to return after the flight of 1900, so his Yamen was openly converted into a Russian Bureau, the town dotted with Russian policemen, and sentries put on the mud walls. Near the Taotai's Yamen rough galvanised iron buildings were erected and a battalion of infantry crammed into them. And, as a concession to the outraged feelings of the residents, the band belonging to this corps was permitted to discourse soft music on the local bund three times a week, and fair ones lately arrived from Europe enlivened the scene with their ribbons. . . .

Three miles higher up the river the settlement of the Chinese Eastern railway rose in importance. Russia Town, as it is locally called, was not a beautiful or impressive place before 1900, and apart from the railway sheds there were no glaring evidences of civilisation. Since 1900 barracks have gone up capable of holding a few thousand soldiery; coal has poured in from Japan to be stored in mighty stacks

all ready for emergencies, and this appears to be all that has been done in three years.

On the right bank of the river, a couple of miles below the town of Newchwang, is the terminus of the Tientsin-Shanhaikwan-Newchwang railway, the line belonging to the Imperial Chinese railways, and built with the money of British bondholders. The story of the Russian action with regard to the railway is well known, but still it is worth repetition. When the Russians were forced to restore the line on the 8th of October, 1902, in conformity with the terms of the Evacuation Agreement, they did so in a manner which is without parallel in recent times. Everything of value was openly removed, and things that could not be removed were simply wrecked; every tool that could be found was looted, and even doors and windows taken out. So insane with rage had the local commanders become at having to retire from vantage points they thought should be theirs by right of conquest, that the blowing up of the Newchwang terminus even was seriously mooted. At this very moment there is a vast amount of this railway loot to be had for a nominal price at Port Arthur. All the foreign firms in Port Arthur have lists of these things—and I have one too—but none of them will buy.

When I arrived in Newchwang for the last time I did not expect to find things so vastly changed in a year, but changes there were to be noted, and some which bode ill for Englishmen and English trade. At the Russian Town station the coal moun-

A Street in Moukden.

Soldiers of the Czar—Viceroy Alexeieff coming down the Saluting Line.

tains were bigger, and there were more armed men about the station, Niu-Chia-tun, to give it the Chinese name, looked more hungry and more wolvish with the approaching winter—looked as if it was going to bite or expected to be bitten, for all men know that militarism is impossible in China for prolonged periods. A thousand mounted infantry and artillery garrisoned the station with their precious coal-heaps, and whips appeared to be more savagely used than usual on the Chinese crowds that tumbled out of the train. With the thickening of the plot, the Russian is casting discretion to the winds.

A launch with a Chinese launch captain, who was in Port Arthur during the Japanese capture and expects war at any moment, spins you down the river to the Newchwang bund. Russia on the launch is represented in the usual way—a few soldiers who look on whilst the Chinaman does the work and collects the money. Arrived in Newchwang itself you see a new sight. The Civil Administrator has built himself a modest palace which would not disgrace the Champs Elysées. It has a beautiful cupola, much white stone facing, and an air of distinction not to be found in the rest of the settlement. During the last few months all the open spaces belonging to Chinese guilds have been grabbed, staked with Russian stakes, and are to be built over with pleasant buildings of the Administrator type. The entire fleet of the Newchwang Tug and Lighter Company—an English venture—has been acquired

by a Russian Government-supported concern and now flies the Russian flag. The shareholders were offered a price, and given to understand that, unless they accepted, a system of diplomatic obstruction on the river would soon ruin them. So, of course, they had to accept, for the British Consul is powerless. Russian launches now puff up and down the river, and although they have none of the trade of the place they represent Russia as the dominant power in Chinese eyes, which is all that is wished. Russian river police, a Russo-Chinese force, control the boat traffic, obstruct Chinese trade, and levy bribes with the utmost unconcern. It is now openly stated that the Russian Civil Administration of Newchwang is paid for out of the Chinese revenues which are nominally held in trust. By the end of 1903 Russia will have impounded upwards of four million taels or half a million sterling of these moneys since 1900—a sum which she has no intention of returning. The employés of the Russo-Chinese Bank, where the money is lodged, cynically remark that the money is Russia's by right of conquest, and that it will never be disgorged ;—at least so long as there remains a soldier to protect it.

For the time being, the terminus of the Chinese system on the right bank of the river is still free and is guarded by foreign-drilled troops of Yuan Shih Kai's force. The extension to Hsin-ming-t'ing, a market-town on the west bank of the Liao, and only forty miles from Moukden, is almost completed, and a growing traffic in passengers and freights is daily

recorded. What a contrast there is between the two stations on the rival banks of the river, and what an object lesson for the man who sees and thinks! Whereas the Russian station is littered with heaps of every imaginable thing, and is without animation except that of armed soldiery, the purely Chinese railway is modest, neat, business-like, and full of ordered bustle. A single Englishman in knickerbockers oversees with the greatest care a hundred miles of road, and does his work far better than the fifty Russians on the other bank who have but fifteen miles under their charge. Two other Englishmen are building the extension, and it is done so quietly and naturally that half the residents in Newchwang know very little about it. What a success England could have in the Far East would but the Government learn sense!

Winter will soon be on Newchwang, and so mud-docks are being built for the British and American gunboats which remain to protect nominally the Anglo-Saxons' rights. Winter brawls are the only results however; for the blue-jackets get savage with Russian policemen, and open hostilities against overwhelming odds, in spite of the fact that their Government will not support them. A Russian Commissioner of Customs has taken the place of the Englishman who used to be there. He is a member of Sir Robert Hart's service, it is true, but he is likewise an officer in the St. Petersburg Imperial Guard reserves, and his duty to his country must come before his duty to his employer. Sir Robert

Hart had no alternative but to accept facts and bow to the Russian, seeing that the British Government could not induce the Chinese Government to act with backbone. There is a nasty feeling in the air at Newchwang—the residents look savage, the Chinese curse the Muscovite with growing vehemence, the Russians have to be careful at night. They have had enough of the new *régime* in Newchwang—enough of unparalleled usurpation. When is the war coming, is the daily question. May it be soon, for although little Japan will do the fighting, the great Far Eastern war will be the vindication of the Anglo-Saxon idea and nothing else—a vindication which the Anglo-Saxon Governments are themselves afraid to undertake.

CHAPTER XXXII

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

THE picture I have drawn of Manchuria as a whole, under the nominal domination of the booted Slav, is one to which those who have been taught to believe that the Three Eastern Provinces have become mere Russian provinces, will perhaps point the finger of scorn and exclaim that it cannot be so. Nevertheless it is so, and as I have paid the greatest attention to the colour-scheme so that light and shade may be reproduced as they really are without exaggeration, hasty rushing over unsavoury details, or any other faults due to a desire foreign to my purpose, the exact position of Manchuria when the guns begin to play should be patent to all. It has become so much the custom to entrust the task of supplying information regarding China to men who do not begin to understand the first principles which should guide in the collecting of that information, that, broadly speaking, it may be said the conception the average man in Europe has of the actual conditions which to-day exist is entirely false, that his perspective is bad and, owing to the new forces at work, each day

makes these shortcomings more and more pronounced. It is, of course, a fact that China is to some extent a Country of Disgust, a place where the inevitable should have happened long ago, and partitions, breakups, and such-like take place, had the prophecies of casual travellers been realised. Instead of this, China has been growing stronger, has been learning more and more, and is shortly to become so formidable that her voice will be the voice of the master who has many old scores to settle up. The commonest market-knowledge should therefore command us, a nation of shopkeepers and shareholders, to see that our balance-sheets are in order, and that we do not suffer the fate of those who wittingly or unwittingly render false accounts and do not know the figures at which their credit balances stand. The Chinese Government is turning more and more to others and less to us, simply because we have no policy and no backbone in the Far East—because the British Government only acts at the very last moment and then mainly acts foolishly. The contemplation of the ignominious failure which Russia has made in Manchuria—her Egypt, she calls it—should be even more of a warning. For what a picture it is for any man who has eyes really to see!

The Chinese Eastern Railway, which has given rise to that grandiloquent phrase "conquest by railway,"—an expression supremely absurd wherever the Chinese are found at home—is a complete failure from every point of view. The rouble, part of the

Russian official plan of conquest, is defeated and paid for. The Russo-Chinese Bank, with its numerous branches, is merely an excrescence due to a temporary disorder of the blood, and has absolutely no reason-of-being in Manchuria. These three great weapons which were to accomplish so much for Russia have become blunted and useless because they have been confronted by what cannot be defeated—the *vis inertiæ* of masses of hostile Chinese. The Russian military Commissairs at the three provincial capitals of Moukden, Kirin, and Tsitsihar have been working in a circle, and have not progressed one inch in their self-appointed task of tying up Chinese local government in such a fashion that Russia has the commanding voice. The Russian military telegraphists in charge of every telegraph station in Manchuria cannot fight the cunning of the Chinese, and are amazed to find that Chinese official messages, which should not travel at all, travel as fast as those of the great Alexeieff himself, and are unable to discover how it is managed. The officers of the army of occupation, high and low alike, receiving insufficient salaries from their Government, and possessing tastes to which they are accustomed to pander, rob right and left, and inefficiency and unpreparedness are the results. Russian commerce in Manchuria, confined as I have already shown to the supplying of purely Russian wants, is not a commerce at all but merely sutlers' work on a vast scale. The existence of Russian settlements and towns, and the presence of huge numbers

of Siberian immigrants are, with the solitary exception of Harbin, absolute inventions. The very numbers of soldiery and civilians at Port Arthur, Harbin, and Dalny, given out by the Russian authorities as the actual figures collected by a census, are known by the Japanese Headquarters Staff to be terribly exaggerated. Russia's Oriental destiny, so far from allowing her to understand and greet as long-lost brothers the sturdy-bodied men of Manchuria, makes her at a loss to understand them at all; and we are confronted by the undeniable fact that the Slav is to-day more hated than any other white man in the world by the Chinese. In a word, Russia has moved both too late and too foolishly in Manchuria for anything but failure to be possible. Already the Chinese of Manchuria have the blessed stream of Anglo-Saxon ideas and ideals rapidly flowing into every hole and corner of the country and saturating them with a moisture which is as the dew from heaven. Manchuria, from the very fact that the possibility of Slav misrule has been brought so close, has been far more receptive of the new idea than almost any other part of China.

It is useless further discussing the question from the present point of view, and so I turn to the future when war will have come and gone. Manchuria, sparsely peopled as it is, and possessing vast stretches of the richest virgin soil, must be at once properly colonised from the northern provinces of China, and the policy of the Emperor Tao-Kwang in putting up the public lands to sale

THE FOREST OF JUNK MASTS ON THE LIAO AT NEWCHWANG.

once more had recourse to. The barriers which China must interpose between herself and her northern neighour, so that at no future date a state of affairs similar to that which has been witnessed to-day can arise, are those most lasting barriers the world knows—barriers of men which are renewed and increased in size and strength as each year grows into the next. It is the false policy of seclusion and exclusion adhered to by the Chinese Government in Manchuria which is in some measure responsible for the Russian movement to the south. Had thick hordes of yellow men been met with directly the feeble frontiers of flowing rivers had been crossed in 1900, even the Russians would have realised the impossibility of making that year anything but a year of retribution, as did allied Europe in Northern China. But finding many deserts, vast lonely steppes, and great rivers like the Sungari, with but a tithe of the population which should crowd their banks, Muravief, Count of the Amur, and what he had done but forty years before, were too soon remembered, and the chastisement became a would-be permanent occupation.

Manchuria must therefore be colonised, especially the two northern provinces of Kirin and Hei-lung-chiang; and the first step brings us to the second. The so-called Manchu Military Administration must end in Kirin and Hei-lung-chiang, and a purely civil administration of the type found in Fengtien province reproduced. The hardy but eminently peaceful people of the north do not

love military rule—though at the sound of the drum, and for a cause that gave them their bellyful of rice, they too could become a myriad of warriors—and therefore a *de facto* civil rule must be everywhere seen in Manchuria at all cost. Manchuria's inland waters, the Liao, the Sungari, the Nonni, and the Hurka must be thrown open to the flags of all nations, under restrictions less severe than those found necessary in China proper, where vested interests, which do not exist to a tithe of the extent in Manchuria, have demanded caution, conservative progress, and not radical reform, which is only feasible in new countries. The Amur must be likewise open to foreign bottoms other than Russian; if it is impossible to secure the right to the Lower Amur, which already is purely Russian, at least from the Ussuri to the head-waters of the Argun must be free to all. The recent American and Japanese treaties, which opened Moukden and Tetungkou and Antung to foreign trade, did good work, but they did not go far enough. Kirin, K'uan-ch'êng-tzu, Tsitsihar, and all the important trade-centres must be opened, since the time is ripe for a grand experiment in Manchuria—that of throwing open the whole country to the foreigner under a passport system. The people are in a receptive condition for such an experiment, because for nearly four years they have seen the white man at his worst, and therefore will not be unwilling to have him at his best—in the guise of a peaceful trader desiring to make profits and nothing else. Man-

churia is a new country even to the Chinese, and in new countries experiments are easily made.

These four initials are absolutely necessary steps —colonisation of the waste lands; substitution of a purely civil administration for the archaic Manchu form in the two northern provinces; opening of the inland waters to the flags of all nations, and the extension of the Treaty Port system so as to include all the great Manchurian marts—and they will pave the way to other things. For instance, unless Russia is prepared to reciprocate fully in the matter of free trade across the Amur frontier, as laid down in the Ignatieff Treaty of 1860, Sir Robert Hart's men and custom houses must go to the eastern, western, and northern frontiers of Manchuria—just as they are on the Franco-Chinese frontier in South China—and the Russian land trade become liable to the ordinary Chinese tariff. A great extension of the Imperial postal system—a sister service of the foreign customs and also under the control of Sir Robert Hart—should also be made, and it would be a wise experiment if a special clause were introduced in the treaty-making which must follow the war, forbidding the establishment of Consular Post Offices in Manchurian Treaty Ports. It is time that China should enter the Postal Union, and the first step will be accomplished when the all-overland European mails are despatched from Dalny by the Chinese Post Office and by no other. The leading idea in the reconstruction which must take place in Manchuria should be the strengthening of Chinese hands where

such strengthening tends to help China along the road of progress.

Although in 1876 the title of Governor-General or Viceroy was conferred on the Military Governor at Moukden, this did not make him the absolute superior of the Manchu Military Governors of the two northern provinces. The Military Governors, styled Tartar Generals, are the highest Manchu military officials in the land, and even in the eighteen provinces of China the Tartar Generals rank with Chinese Viceroys, representing, as they do, the direct authority of the Manchu conquest. The Governor-General at Moukden, in order to make him the actual supreme administrative head in the three eastern provinces, and to arrange things so that Manchuria can be considered as a whole, must have under him at Kirin and Tsitsihar civil governors, just as each province in China is directly ruled by a civil governor. In the eighteen provinces Governor-Generals rule over two linked provinces, or in some few instances a single province; but in the case of the Liang-Chiang-Tsung-Tu, or the Nanking Viceroy, control is exercised over three provinces—those of Anhui, Kiangsu, and Kiandsi. A precedent therefore exists for placing the three provinces of Manchuria under a single Governor-General with civil provincial governors at each provincial capital; and this levelling up will automatically destroy many evils which to-day exist owing to the survival of the Manchu system and the incompleteness of the military mandarinate.

New Residence of the Usurping Russian Civil Administrator of Newchwang.

Harbin.

The matter of Manchurian garrisons and what they are to be in the future is a most difficult one, for although efficiency is absolutely necessary in order to suppress for once and for all the brigand pest, and also to have frontier points properly protected, the question brings us face to face with that archaic Manchu military organisation—the Banner forces—which are far more easy to defeat on the field of battle than on paper. It is assumed that there are about a million and a half of this Banner population in Manchuria, the descendants of the men who made the conquest of China, who, living a lotus life, and having no need to work, do but little to justify their existence. Of this number all the able-bodied men draw monthly pensions and allowances, although but little drill has taken place for years. Forty thousand Banner men are enrolled in the active forces, as I have already said, but their activity is confined to bow and arrow practice once a week, and a prompt retreat when any untoward circumstances arise. But in spite of their absolute uselessness, the Throne dares not tamper with their ancient privileges, and so in Manchuria as in Peking, these effete persons hinder real reform. That an efficient force of the type of Yuan-Shih-Kai's foreign-drilled Tientsin army must be despatched to Manchuria when things have settled down, is absolutely certain ; but a permanent solution of this difficulty will only be found by turning to the Japanese. After the war is over, for I assume that war must come and that Japanese efficiency is in

the end bound to defeat Slav corruption, Japanese drill-sergeants and Japanese advisers will most probably be largely used in Manchuria; for the Japanese are nothing if not thorough, and they will absolutely insist, and quite rightly so, that China should set her Manchurian house in order so that a permanent settlement may be certain.

And this brings us face to face with the Russian Empire in Manchuria—the empire of the iron track. What is to become of it? who is to deal with it? what is it worth? these are some of the questions which immediately occur, and which are hard to answer. Personally, I am of the opinion that Russia has forfeited all right to the concession. If Japan goes to the enormous expense and risk of invoking war's rude arbitrament and the God Mars decides in her favour, the railway should be hers by right of conquest. How much will remain of it when the war is finished, it would be foolish to say, but that the Japanese will abstain from destroying it except as a very last resource is quite certain. Any destruction, total or partial, will come from the Russian side, for the Muscovites are the Vandals of the twentieth century. One has only to remember the savage and barbarous manner in which they retreated from the Shanhaikwan—Newchwang railway in time of peace to realise what they will do during a war; and should things go absolutely against them before they recross the Amur, Russian commanders will expend their last dynamite cart-

ridges in completing the destruction of what has been a monumental work.

The sorry salvage the Chinese Eastern Railway may then be, will not find buyers tumbling over one another in their haste to bid; but still I believe that with judicious handling the railway could be floated as a limited liability company for a very large figure running into many millions. When the Seoul-Wiju line is an accomplished fact—when an extension is made from the Yalu frontier line to Newchwang and when Hsin-min-t'un (the present terminus of the Imperial Chinese Railways in Manchuria) is joined with Moukden, only forty miles distant—Manchuria will have unexcelled railway facilities which should see the rich country developed at a phenomenal rate.

The future in Manchuria is a magnificent one, for Manchuria is destined to become the greatest wheat-producer in the East, the greatest lumber-field, and the greatest gold mining centre. At the present moment, beans constitute the agricultural wealth of the country, but this will not remain so for long. Manchuria is a wheat country, and flour will, in a few years, have taken the place of beans in the export list. When it is remembered that there are tens of millions of acres only awaiting the plough to become wonderfully productive, and that at the present moment only the great central valley from the Liaotung to Harbin is really properly developed, it will be realised how much there is to be done and how little has as yet been attended to. The success of the Harbin flour mills has filled the Chinese with

envy, and when things have settled down again modern flour mills will dot the country. At many places in Manchuria I was eagerly questioned by Chinese dealers about milling machinery, its cost, working, and many other details, about which, alas, I was but too ignorant; and I was further astonished by one man asking me to send him details about steam ploughs, steam harvesters, etc., etc. In Manchuria many farms are of huge extent and American labour-saving machinery must sooner or later come into use. Even at Moukden, which is in the centre of the kao-liang, or tall millet country, a syndicate of native millers are about to put up a big steam flour mill. Here wheat is but the secondary crop, whereas in the Sungari regions wheat is the primary crop and kao-liang but the secondary. Lumber is to be had in vast quantities in the great eastern forests; coal is very abundant, and, best of all, Manchuria is covered with auriferous and argentiferous deposits of great richness.

With such prospects the Chinese Eastern Railway formed into a private company would be a gilt-edged security, and shareholders would have no cause to repent an investment. Chinese railways are some day going to astonish the share-markets of the world; for in a country where the operation of a hundred miles of track costs but a quarter of what it does in Europe, where every man is a born trader and traveller, and where money-saving appliances are fairly worshipped, it cannot be otherwise.

The British Government, for reasons best known

THE NEWCHWANG LIKIN-STATION—UNDER RUSSIAN OCCUPATION.

H.M.S. "RINALDO" WINTERING AT NEWCHWANG

to itself, and quite unintelligible to one who merely knows the country of China from childhood, has been pleased to sign the ridiculous St. Petersburg self-denying ordinance, wherein the Russian Government was most faithfully promised that railway concessions would not be sought for by British subjects beyond the Great Wall of China—that is, in Manchuria—if Russia on her part abstained from obtaining concessions within the Great Wall. England has kept strictly to her contract, whereas the Russo-Chinese Bank, the acknowledged agent of St. Petersburg Government, has openly secured concessions in Honan, Shansi, and elsewhere, which set the whole agreement at nought. It is such weak-knee'd acts which have made Englishmen in the Far East welcome the approaching war; for they know that unless Japan comes to the rescue, the doom of the Anglo-Saxon in the Far East is at hand. But Russia has gone even farther than this. It is a matter of common knowledge that the Belgian Peking-Hankow line has some secret agreement with Russia and that the recent acquiring of a controlling interest in the American Hankow-Canton road by the same Belgian syndicate was directly prompted from St. Petersburg. On paper, Russia has her way prepared down to the Pearl River already; possibly Hong Kong is even now marked as a suitable naval base!

And now that I have mentioned the Russo-Chinese Bank, it is time to deal with it. What should China's attitude, prompted by Japan, be towards this insti-

tution? I would say, one of uncompromising hostility, extending to the length of interdicting its presence on Chinese soil. The Russo-Chinese Bank has been the chief agent in compassing the absorption of Manchuria, and as it is to all intents and purposes a subsidised off-shoot of the St. Petersburg Ministry of Finance, the commonest caution demands that it be excluded from operating anywhere in the Empire of China, so long as its organisation remains what it is at present. The colony of Hong Kong will not allow it on its soil; if Hong Kong can prohibit it, why cannot China? The Bank is the Jesuit of politico-finance, and although the world now looks with indifference on the creation of a Loyola, the Far East has been so shaken by the work of an Uktomski that to practise a policy of expulsion is not so mediæval as it might seem at first sight.

Japan, having as she will the casting vote in the Manchurian settlement, should remember that she has in Tokyo hundreds of Chinese students, many of whom were dispatched thither to complete their studies by various Chinese provincial Governments. The majority of these young men, having completed their Chinese classical studies before they went abroad, are eminently fit persons to receive Government appointments in Manchuria; and no time should be lost in filling up junior grades in the three eastern provinces with such suitable candidates. It is the Anglo-Saxon idea filtrated through Japanese brains which is the corner-stone of these men's new education, and that this idea should come in this

way is good for England; for the pouring of new wine into old bottles is at the best of times a dangerous experiment and should proceed slowly. In China the new should take its place side by side with the old, and by superiority alone—if that superiority really exists—gradually consign the archaic to the limbo of the past.

And now that I bid good-bye to Manchuria, I pray a prayer that the Lord of Hosts will be kind to Japan—will help her in her hour of need—and that this vindication about to be enacted will be properly understood in England. Until the British Government decides that England's only policy is to insist that her interests extend right up to the actual frontier-stones of the Russian Empire, and promptly retaliates, should a Cossack be moved past those frontier-stones, we will continue to present the ridiculous and unmanly figure we do to-day in the Far East. Japan is fighting England's battle almost as much as she is fighting her own, and Russia defeated by Japan will mean Russia crippled for a number of years without tale. It is useless speaking of the recuperative power of countries like France and Russia, that are, so to speak, self-contained; that they do recuperate and shake off the ill-effects of defeats with marvellous rapidity is a fact. But defeat is a thing which leaves its mark more on the spirit of a nation than in earthly things. The flesh may become strong again, but the flesh only endures a few years, and until new generations grow up, the spirit is sore, and never quite the same.

The chastisement, therefore, accomplished, China should progress still more than she is doing at present. For the time being, the signs are not very clear of that progress, and there are even some who are still sceptical of there really being any progress at all; but clear or not, progress is actually being made, and the dawn is at hand. The irresistible pressure of new ideas beating eagerly everywhere in China can have but one result, and that result will be a victory to progress and enlightenment. Russia has believed that she had an Oriental destiny, and it may be that once she was not wrong. But to-day that manifest destiny has lost itself, or been crushed out of existence by her own foolishness and backwardness.

Just as Japan must come over the seas to perform her duty and accomplish her task, so have the new ideas already sped to Manchuria and made the Russian position an impossible one. Some writers look at the Russo-Chinese frontiers and exclaim that it is useless struggling against the inevitable absorption which must come if the doctrine of might or eminent domain be a true one. Wait until the war is over, I say, and see what the Gods decree. Even Napoleon fell, and to-day, there are no Napoleons—except a dandy cavalry officer in the Czar's Imperial Guard.

THE NOMINAL EVACUATION OF NEWCHWANG, APRIL 8TH, 1903.

APPENDIX

A GENERAL AND STATISTICAL NOTE ON MANCHURIA

1. *Boundaries.*

Adjoining Russian territory: The Argun River in the west, the Amur River in the north to the Ussuri River, and in the east the Ussuri River to Lake Hinka and from thence a line to the mouth of the Tiumen River. Adjoining Korean territory: The Tiumen River from its mouth to its course and thence the Yalu from its headwaters to the sea. The southern boundary of Manchuria is the sea. The western frontier begins at a point outside the Great Wall at Shanhaikwan and runs north by east to Petuna on the Sungari; from near Petuna the boundary is formed by the River Nonni to its junction with the River Cholo and from thence it follows an imaginary line drawn from the mouth of the Cholo to the southernmost extremity of Lake Dalai Nor, out of which the River Argun empties itself.

2. *Notes on the Boundary Lines.*

The Manchurian-Russian frontiers are well-defined, since they are almost entirely formed by rivers, and encroachment is therefore easily noticed. But it is significant that south of the Ussuri where there is merely an imaginary frontier line, the Russians have encroached since 1900 and have bitten a few dozen miles into Kirin province. The Manchurian-Korean frontiers being also formed by rivers are quite clear except in the regions of latitude 41-42°. Here there is some doubt, since the sources of the Tiumen and

the Yalu are some distance apart. Korean hunters continually encroach on this boundary of Kirin province and the Kirin military governor has constantly to dispatch troops to settle frontier disputes between Chinese and Koreans. This is at a point south-east of the Ever White Mountains. Since 1898, owing to the leasing of the Kuantung territory to Russia, the Liaotung southern frontier instead of being entirely formed by the sea is formed by a line drawn from Pu-lan-tien on the western Liaotung coast to P'i-tzu-wo on the eastern coast. The western Manchurian-Mongolian land frontier is somewhat vague. In Fengtien province there is not much doubt, since Chinese territorial officials on the Mongolian frontier have fairly accurate maps in their possession showing the exact extent of their jurisdiction, but in Kirin and Hei-lung-chiang provinces it is different. There the Chinese agriculturist is slowly but surely pushing back the Mongol and claiming waste lands as his own, although they lie far across the true frontier. Thus K'uan-ch'êng-tzu, which is on purely Mongol territory, is to-day entirely administered by Chinese or Manchu officials. Huai-tai-hesien, which lies fifty miles farther to the west and is therefore still more on purely Mongol territory, is likewise administered by Chinese officials. Petuna is purely Chinese and from Petuna Chinese settlers have already pushed nearly one hundred miles further west although Petuna is the frontier town. Taking the Nonni line of country, there are no evidences of Chinese cultivation except close to the Sungari junction point. Indeed, between here and Tsitsihar both banks of the Nonni are practically deserted and the left bank, or the Manchurian side, is overrun for many miles inland by Du-la-ha Mongols engaged in pony breeding. From the Cholo to Lake Dalai Nor the country is very desolate, the Mongol population insignificant, and the Chinese conspicuous by their absence. These western Manchurian-Mongolian frontiers are only really valued and accepted by the Chinese where emigrants have broken soil and are cultivating, and it may therefore be said that Chinese cultivation forms the real Manchurian-Mongolian frontier.

3. *Area and Physical Features.*

Hosie estimates that the area included in the boundaries given above is about 360,000 square miles, and there is no reason why his figures should be questioned. Of the three provinces Hei-lung-chiang, or the northern province, is by far the most extensive, having an area of from 190,000 to 200,000 square miles. Kirin, the central province, has an area of 110,000 square miles and Fengtien but 60,000 square miles. The great physical feature of Manchuria is the vast central valley which runs from Newchwang to a point one hundred miles north of Harbin. In this rich valley overflowing with agricultural wealth are placed all Manchuria's rich cities and the bulk of Manchuria's population. The soil, which is of exceptional depth, is magnificent and every kind of crop is successfully cultivated. In western Fengtien there are vast plains, but as you progress further north rising ground becomes more frequent. This has an important bearing from the trade point of view, for the regions adjoining the Liao become very swampy during the July-August rainy season and the roads are often impassable. The eastern parts of Fengtien province and Kirin are hilly and mountainous, but except for the regions immediately adjoining the Ever White Mountains rich valleys susceptible of cultivation cut the country into which settlers are gradually pushing. A noticeable instance is the Hai-lung-ch'êng district on the Fengtien-Kirin boundary line. Hosie notes that the Chino-Japanese war caused great numbers of Liaotung inhabitants to emigrate there, and what was ten years ago a very wild country is to-day quite settled. North-eastern Kirin is still very wild and practically untouched by settlers and contains desolate stretches of forests and swamps. In Hei-lung-chiang province is to be found that formidable range of mountains the Hsing-an, which, although of no great altitude, stretch across the centre of the province roughly north by east, and cut the country in two. South-east of these mountains there are high-lying plains. North and east the country is desolate and very bleak at all times of the year, except during the short eight weeks

of summer. The three provinces are on the whole well-watered. The most important river in the south is the Liao, which empties itself into the Liaotung Gulf at Newchwang. The Liao is navigable up to Tiehling by junks—a distance of one hundred and eighty miles; by very small craft still higher. The Liao becomes the Sira Muren in Mongolia, from whence it springs, but here it is an insignificant and swampy stream. The greatest river in Manchuria is the Sungari, which, rising in the Ever White Mountains near the Fengtien frontier, sweeps in a vast bend towards the Amur, into which it finally empties itself opposite Habarovsk. Its total length is over one thousand miles, and it is navigable to a point some distance above Kirin city. Russian steamers go to-day from Habarovsk to Kirin without difficulty. The third river of importance is the Nonni, which is an affluent of the Sungari and navigable up to Tsitsihar by shallow-draft steamers. The Hurka is another tributary of the Sungari, but it is little used as a waterway and is therefore without importance. The Liao, the Sungari, and the Nonni have many small tributaries, but these are only practicable for diminutive native craft and do not deserve special mention.

4. *Population.*

The population of Manchuria was estimated by Hosie at seventeen millions in 1900, but this is far too low an estimate for to-day. The Japanese place the population at twenty millions and base their figures on recent researches. In view of the great influx into the country since the building of the railway these figures are probably the nearest to the actual population. The vast bulk of this population is simply northern Chinese who have emigrated to Manchuria at vastly different periods. In Liaotung there is a very old Chinese population, but as you go further north the date at which the inhabitants entered the country becomes ever more recent. At Hulan, which lies across the Sungari half an hour from Harbin, there are many thousands of pure Shantung people who have come very recently. In Liaohsi, that is, the country west of the Liao in Fengtien

province, there are great numbers of Shansi people who emigrated there during the great famine of a few decades ago. Of the twenty millions, which we will assume as the correct figure, at least seventeen millions are pure Chinese. The Manchu, or Banner population, is estimated at one and a-half millions by Hosie, but the Chinese claim that this estimate is too low. In Hei-lung-chiang there are still a certain number of Solons, Mongols, and other indigenous tribes scattered in small communities over the vast country, but it would be unwise to state how many there actually are to-day. From conversations with an official attached to the Superintendent of Nomads yamen it would appear that it is only a question of a few years for these remaining tribesmen to become sunk in the mass of the Chinese population. In Kirin province there are still a few Fish-skin Tartars left near the mouth of the Sungari, but their numbers are insignificant. I may remark that the European Press has discovered a new tribe in Manchuria—the Chunchuses—who are concerned with railway raiding. It is not unwise to identify this new tribe with the hunghutzu, or mounted brigands, who are recruited from very commonplace Chinese. From a population point of view Manchuria may be said to resemble almost exactly the metropolitan province of Chihli.

5. *Language.*

The dialect of Manchuria is simply Pekingese, or so-called northern mandarin, in a clearer or more muffled form as the case may be. In the provincial capitals of Manchuria and the older cities admirable Pekingese is spoken, for the uncouth Manchus of three centuries ago are to-day the most polished and polite of Chinese, although the most lazy. At Moukden, Kirin, and Tsitsihar, the clearness of speech of the people one and all is very remarkable and most pleasing to the ear. Especially noticeable is this in case of the women who ring out the four tones with the clearness of bells. As you go farther afield the differences of speech are very interesting to the sinologue, for the successive waves of immigration into the country have left

their mark on the dialects of the inhabitants. In northern Kirin, where there is a large Mahommedan population from the back provinces of China, a distinct dialect is spoken which recalls the guttural tones of Tung Fu Hsiang's Kansu braves. In south-eastern Hei-lung-chiang the Shantung immigrants outnumber the other inhabitants and the ill-sounding dialect of that province is consequently most heard. In western Fengtien the Shansi dialect is common. All these dialects of northern Chinese are, however, but little different from polite Pekingese, and a muffled pronunciation is the principal ground of divergence. Of Manchu there is to-day no trace in Manchuria. Hosie states in his authoritative book that proclamations in Manchu are still to be found in remote corners of Manchuria, but I have been unable to confirm this. Indeed, in Moukden and the other provincial capitals it was absolutely denied that there are any districts where Manchu is exclusively used, and except among the ever diminishing numbers of Yu-Pi Ta-tzu or Fish-skin Tartars in northern Kirin, the Solon Manchus in northern Hei-lung-chiang and one or two Manchu communities near the Ever White Mountains, I am unable to see where such can be the case. The Solons all speak Chinese and so do the Fish-skins. Manchu is indeed far more of a dead language in Manchuria than is Latin in Europe, for in the Manchu schools at Kirin and Moukden, kept up under special orders from Peking, the teachers themselves have a very imperfect knowledge of the language of their forefathers and men have to be constantly sent from Peking to help them in their work. Most of the males of the Banner population of Manchuria know a few of the old Manchu words of command, but that is all. A Manchu colonel in Kirin confessed to me that he knew only fifteen words in all. The solitary instance in which Manchu is *de rigueur* is in the great State ceremonies in Peking, when the Emperor must have addresses translated into Manchu. In this case it is, however, notorious that the senior Manchu prince present, on whom the duty devolves of performing this nominal *viva voce* translation, mumbles a regular formula on his bended knees

which he has learnt by heart and which has but little of the sense of the Chinese spoken. Considering that the Manchu alphabet was non-existent until the beginning of the seventeenth century and that it was merely invented by crudely changing the Mongol style of writing, that the Manchus were the very rudest people until they became civilised through contact with the Chinese, and that the five hundred books in the Manchu language are merely imperfect translations of Chinese originals, it will be readily understood how soon the Manchus lost all knowledge of their own language.

6. *Agriculture.*

Manchuria is primarily an agricultural country and the wealth lies rather in the rural districts than in the towns. The great central valley is the centre of this agricultural development, but settlers are rapidly opening up other regions. Kaoliang, or the tall millet of the north, and beans are at the present moment the most extensively cultivated, but there is no lack of other cereals. In the regions surrounding Harbin, wheat is rapidly becoming the primary crop and displacing kaoliang on account of its greater value. Barley, dry rice, and Indian corn are also largely grown. In the lower Liaotung, Indian corn is very extensively cultivated and forms in some districts the staple food of the people. Tobacco, ginseng, and opium poppy also form important categories and the cultivation and preparation of the native drug is rapidly narrowing down the market for Indian opium in Manchuria. No reliable estimates can be furnished of the agricultural wealth, or of the actual or approximate acreage under crops since, excepting the figures of the Chinese Imperial Customs, there is no trustworthy data to work on in China. There is, however, every reason to suppose that the amount of beans, kaoliang, and wheat raised even to-day would support twice the present population of Manchuria and that even sixty or seventy millions of people would not overtax the resources of the three eastern provinces. Fruits, vegetables, dye, and oil-yielding plants are also largely grown and

every year sees these quantities increase. It is merely a question of time for Manchuria to become China's Canada.

7. *Animal and Mineral Products.*

Silk is now largely cultivated in Fengtien province, and here again the figures yearly expand. Furs and skins are very important items, and the sable, the fox, the bear, the lamb, the goat, the raccoon, the squirrel, the tiger, and the sheep all help to swell the export list. The Newchwang Custom House figures, however, do not give one any idea of this great fur and skin trade, for much goes by caravan to Tientsin—the great China port for hides and skins—and its Manchurian identity is lost. Dog-skins and dog-rugs are great Manchurian products, for dog-farms exist in many parts of northern Manchuria, where the great Mongolian dog is bred in large quantities and slaughtered before the end of winter. In the mining field gold, copper, lead, iron, and coal are mined ; but far the most important in this category is the output of the precious yellow metal, which is said to total fifteen million taels a year, or two millions sterling. It is impossible to give a satisfactory account of the Manchurian gold-mining industry, for the big mines are all under Chinese Government control, and the officials jealously guard the secrets of their outputs. As the methods adopted are very primitive, and modern mining machinery quite unknown, attention is only given to alluvial deposits. Mr. E. Lenox Simpson, the English mining engineer in charge of the Kuantung gold-mines, is of opinion that it would repay to work over again the dumps from the Chinese mines. The rock formation is likewise pronounced by him to be practically the same in the mining districts as that of California. Refractory ores are seldom met with, and eastern and northern Manchuria are rich with auriferous deposits. Serious attention is invited to the vast possibilities of Manchuria as a gold-mining country.

8. *Industries.*

The manufacture of bean cake and bean oil at Newchwang and elsewhere is probably the most important industry in

Manchuria, but there are others of great value. Salt-making is largely carried on in the Liao estuary ; samshu, the Chinese brandy, is everywhere manufactured ; there is a great leather industry centred at Kirin and Moukden ; pork-making is largely carried on in all the towns, and the salted Manchurian hog is eaten all over China. Besides these there are, of course, the countless other smaller industries found wherever the Chinaman is, but special mention is unnecessary.

9. *Climate.*

The climate of Manchuria may be called extreme, for in winter the cold experienced is most severe, and in summer the sun shines in the skies like a burning copper disc, and the thermometer rises to nearly one hundred degrees Fahrenheit in the shade. Hei-lung-chiang is the coldest of the three provinces, and Ravenstein fifty years ago recorded the fact that observations showed the cold experienced along the shores of the Sea of Okhotsk to be hardly more severe than that in the mountainous parts of the Amur regions. Forty-nine below zero, or eighty-one degrees of frost, is the lowest actually recorded in Manchuria, but it is believed that the Roman Catholic mission stations in the extreme north of Kirin have noted ten or fifteen degrees lower. This is, however, in Kirin province, and it is said by the Chinese that the Hsing-an Mountains are far colder. It is perhaps no exaggeration of speech to say that north-western Manchuria is one of the coldest parts of the world. As you go south the climate improves, but still it is very severe in winter. Even Newchwang has seen fifty degrees of frost, but this is exceptional, and, generally speaking, the average winter minimum is not much below zero Fahrenheit. In Dalny and Port Arthur, although the cold is bitter, the sea does not freeze to any great extent, and ships can leave both ports at all times of the year. It is, however, to be noted that the building of breakwaters at Dalny is defeating the purpose for which that port was designed, for the ice is becoming more and more dangerous as the stone piers extend out to sea, and if the system were ever completed

it would undoubtedly have the result of making Dalny an ice-bound harbour instead of an ice-free one. The north wind is the terror of Manchuria. When it blows no covering of furs is sufficient to keep out the piercing cold, and life is almost unbearable in the open. However, these blows rarely last three days, and when they have ceased, the sun shines so brightly that the dry cold is not felt. In southern Manchuria snow does not fall to any great extent. In the north, unless heavy falls occur at the very beginning of winter, it becomes too cold for snow. In summer the great July–August rains flood the country and make communication very difficult. Much of the low-lying country is below water and the roads are impassable. The great height of the railway embankments of the Chinese Eastern Railway is necessary to guard against this summer inconvenience. From the point of view of campaigning it may be said that the conditions are best from October to April; for as soon as the great melting begins in April–May the whole country is extremely boggy and difficult to negotiate, and two months later (in July) Jupiter Pluvius is to be feared.

10. *The Great Towns and Strategic Points.*

The majority of the big towns in Manchuria are found in Fengtien province, but the great mass of the population even in this province lives in the rural countries. Next to Moukden, the provincial capital, which has a population somewhere between 150,000 and 200,000, comes the important town of Liaoyang. Liaoyang is probably the oldest town in Manchuria and has a history which goes back to many centuries before the time the Manchus were known. Its population is estimated at 100,000 inhabitants, and it lies practically astride of the railway commanding the central valley. The regions surrounding Liaoyang have always been the centre of fierce struggles in ages gone by and will continue to be so in the future. But thirty-five miles south of Liaoyang is Hai-ch'êng, a city of some sixty thousand inhahitants. Hai-ch'êng also lies but a mile or two from the railway, and surrounded as it is by low-lying

hills, it is even more important than Liaoyang. The Yalu roads all run from the neighbourhood of these two towns, and Hai-ch'êng was one of the first Japanese objectives in the Chino-Japanese war. History will repeat itself. About one hundred and twenty miles south-east of Liaoyang, and but fifty or sixty miles from the Yalu estuary, is the important town of Fêng-huang-ch'êng. Fêng-huang-ch'êng is the chief town on the road to Korea, and has a population of fifty thousand inhabitants. It was the first Japanese objective in 1894. On the Liaotung peninsula, Hsiu-yen near the east coast, and Fu-chou and Kai-chou near the west coast, are towns of importance, having from forty to fifty thousand inhabitants. All these towns command the great highways and have grown up with the increase in the road traffic. North of Moukden and along the line of the railway is Tiehling. Tiehling is the centre of the Manchurian iron ore industry, and is also a great trade *entrepôt*. As it lies on the left bank of the Upper Liao, during winter immense quantities of farm produce are collected here to be shipped south with the melting of the ice on the Liao. Tiehling has a population of nearly one hundred thousand inhabitants and cannot fail to be a place of great importance when the wave of war bursts on Manchuria. Thirty miles north of Tiehling is K'ai-yüan, another large city only a few miles from the railway. In the Liao-hsi, the country on the right bank of the Liao, there are other important towns, witness Hsin-min-t'un, the terminal point of the Shanhaikwan Chinese Railway system ; but these lie far away from the Chinese Eastern Railway, and have therefore but little interest at the present moment. In the province of Kirin, the most important towns are Kirin, the provincial capital, with a population somewhere near a quarter of a million inhabitants ; K'uan-ch'êng-tzu, with over a quarter of a million people and the largest city in Manchuria ; Ninguta near the Eastern frontier ; Petuna near the Mongolian frontier ; Sansing, which commands the lower Sungari and Harbin. Ninguta, Petuna, and Sansing have populations which it is impossible to ascertain accurately, but probably they one and all hover

in the neighbourhood of fifty thousand inhabitants. Hei-lung-chiang has but one big town, Tsitsihar, the provincial capital, with a population of one hundred thousand at least. Apart from the places enumerated above numbers of small market towns dot the country, but they are without importance, and are merely collecting points for country produce.

II. *The Russians in Manchuria.*

Details have already been given elsewhere concerning the lease of the Kuantung territory to Russia, in which territory stand Port Arthur and Dalny. The frontier of this leased territory is formed by a line drawn from Pu-lan-tien on the west coast to P'i-tzu-wo on the east coast. It is interesting to note that the Austria gold-mine, to which I have referred elsewhere, is at Pu-lan-tien, and that the owners have Russian title-deeds; and that it was at P'i-tzu-wo that the Japanese effected the landing in 1894 which led to the capture of Port Arthur. North of the leased territory there is a so-called neutral zone, the limits of which are formed by a line drawn from Kai-chou on the west coast to Taku-shan on the east coast. China may not station troops within this zone, which is very mountainous and easy to defend. The Russian civil population in Port Arthur and Dalny is most certainly under twenty thousand all told, and of this number the vast majority is composed of people drawing their sustenance directly or indirectly from the Russian Government. The *bonâ fide* mercantile population is very small. In Port Arthur there are three hundred Europeans other than Russian, of whom twenty-one are Englishmen. In Dalny there are seven Englishmen. Indian watchmen are to be found in considerable numbers in both ports, but there is considerable difficulty in obtaining the actual numbers, as they do not register themselves anywhere. The number is probably in the neighbourhood of one hundred. Taking Manchuria proper, Harbin is said by the Russians to have a population, duly accounted for by a census, of thirty thousand Russians, but the Japanese state that

these figures must be heavily discounted. Probably the number is eighteen thousand or even less. Minor railway stations and railway settlements have a few hundred more, and I therefore estimate the total number of Russian civilian population in Manchuria proper at 20,000, and in the Kuantung leased territory at 22,000. Hardly any Russians are seen off the railway, and the "civil population" has been steadily decreasing as Russian Government enterprises have been completed.

The number of troops in Manchuria on evacuation day, the 8th October, by which I include the so-called railway or frontier guards, was under sixty thousand; in the Kuantung leased territory about twenty-nine thousand. The entire Russian civil population in both Manchuria and the Kuantung leased territory was living on the "activity" of the Russian Government—an activity which expressed itself in railway building, railway repair-shops, naval yards, provisioning of troops, etc., etc. Except for purchasing fresh food supplies and building materials from the Chinese this Russian population along the railway had absolutely no connection with real Manchuria—and Manchuria is as unknown to the Russian in 1904 as it was in 1900. There are over six thousand unattached women along the railway Empire. It is therefore quite plain that had the Russian Government ordered evacuation to take place and withdrawn all troops excepting the railway guards (22,000), and the Port Arthur normal garrison (8,000), the figures of the Russian civil population would have shrunk to nothing. Abnormal Government expenditure, and the presence of ninety thousand armed men gave the civilians their daily food.

The Chinese Eastern Railway has a length of track approximating 1,600 miles in all. There are one hundred and two stations, divided on a cast-iron system into classes. Thus a first-class station has a restaurant; a second-class only a buffet, and a third-class one nothing at all. The distribution of railway guards is based partly on the class system and partly on strategic grounds. There is much nonsense written about this Manchurian line

which it is as well to correct. Recent maps show an extension which reaches towards Peking, leaving the main track of the Manchurian system somewhere in the neighbourhood of Khailar and darting vaguely through Mongolia. There is no such line. Other maps show the proposed line connecting the provincial capital of Kirin with the Central Manchurian section as an accomplished fact. This line has not been commenced, nor has Russia received Chinese Imperial permission to build it, although the Manchu Military Governor of Kirin has recommended its construction on commercial grounds. There is no extension to Ninguta, as shown on some maps, and none has ever been planned. There is no lack of rolling stock suitable for military purposes. I estimate the number of locomotives in Manchuria on the 1st January, 1904, at 380; the number of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd class carriages at 2,500; 4th class carriages 1,500; opened and closed goods trucks. at 2,000. These estimates are partly based on personal observations, and partly on the returns furnished me by an Engineer in Russian employ. It is to be noted that cars can be constructed at Dalny and Harbin—the iron parts being sent from Europe, and the wood-work, etc., supplied locally. A point of interest is that in spite of the fact that the Chinese Eastern Railway is classed a foreign line, according to the Russian returns—all the rolling stock bears the numbering of the Russian State system. At Harbin I spent four hours noting the numbers on carriages and goods wagons of every description. Their numbers varied from No. 86,000 to No, 380,000, showing that the rolling stock "interchanges" between Russia and Manchuria without distinction. Measuring the sidings by pacing and dividing them up into train lengths it is clear that stations of the first-class in Manchuria can side-track from eight to fifteen trains. Contrary to so-called expert military judgment in Europe, I am of the opinion, based on accurate calculations in train-speeds, siding-capacities, rolling-stock, locomotive hauling-power, fuel supplies, repair-shops, local food supplies, state of permanent way, etc., etc., that as far as the Manchurian system is concerned Russia can trans-

port to Manchuria and there feed at least half a million men without insuperable difficulties. Basing my ideas on these calculations it will take but six months from the date of declaration of war to perform this task. By the 1st of August Russia should be as strong as she can ever be in Manchuria.

12. *The Japanese in Manchuria.*

The numbers of Japanese in Manchuria at the end of 1903 were as follows:

Harbin 1000, Port Arthur 800, Dalny 400, Newchwang, Moukden, Kirin, Petuna, about forty or fifty in each. The total number of Japanese in Manchuria and the Kuantung territory therefore amounts to at least 2,500. Of this number probably more than half is composed of women who follow the troops. The men are mainly hewers of wood and drawers of water to the Russians, and are generally speaking of a very inferior class, with the exception of the Japanese firms at Newchwang. A great number of desperate characters are to be found amongst the Mikado's subjects. They are, however, extremely useful to Japan as nearly all are connected with the Japanese Intelligence Department and supply very accurate information on movement of troops, food supplies, etc., etc. In October there were a number of Staff officers in Manchuria sent specially from Tokyo and disguised as tradespeople and Chinese. All Japanese in Manchuria speak Russian fluently; but their knowledge of Chinese is very superficial. Japan's commercial interests in Manchuria are growing yearly, for the export of beans and beancake, which formerly was confined almost entirely to Hong Kong and other China ports, is now being largely diverted to Japan, where higher prices are obtainable. It is quite certain that when wheat-flour enters more generally into the Japanese dietary, as is daily becoming more the case, a free export of cereals from Manchuria will be indispensable to Japan. Fifty per cent. of the shipping entering Manchurian ports is Japanese, and these figures yearly tend to expand.

13. *Trade.*

The trade of Manchuria is estimated by Hosie to reach twenty millions sterling per annum—a very remarkable figure, seeing that this means at least one pound sterling per head of population, whereas in China proper, the yearly average of trade does not exceed three shillings and sixpence per head. Of this Manchurian trade about ten millions sterling is dealt with at Newchwang, and the importance of that Treaty Port from the Russian point of view is therefore easily understood. The balance of the trade is either the junk-trade along the Manchurian sea-board or the trans-frontier trade with the Russian province of the Amur. The Yalu lumber trade dealt with mainly at Antung and Ta-tung-k'ou is alone valued at one million sterling per annum. The Sungari trade in wheat with Habarovsk and other Siberian towns is very considerable—and the cattle trade with Blagoveschenk and other Upper Amur Russian towns and settlements is yearly growing. Russia is yearly becoming more dependent on the three eastern provinces to supply her Amur and Pacific settlements with food stuffs. Analysing the only reliable returns of trade—those of the Newchwang Custom House—it is seen that beans and their products form the principal items in the export list and that cotton clothes form the most considerable item in the import list.

14. *Concluding Remarks.*

It is not intended to make this appendix an exhaustive and complete account and therefore details concerning revenue and other statistics must be sought for elsewhere. Suffice to say that Mr. Hosie's book covers all the necessary ground and deals with trade, revenue, administration, industries, and all other purely reference-book information most exhaustively.

ADDENDUM

In view of the fact that the appointment of Admiral Alexeieff to the "Imperial Lieutenancy of the Far East" on the 13th August, 1903, was only a move on the diplomatic chess-board and merely increased and solidified the powers the Russian Commander-in-Chief in the Far East had possessed since the time of the Boxers, I have purposely omitted any specific mention of that high officer; but in order to bring out certain special points and to show how the idea of a railway empire consisting of a five-foot track with a thirty-verst-broad policing strip along its entire length was intended ultimately to spell absorption of the three eastern provinces, I must reluctantly add this note.

In the Kuantung Leasing Agreement of the 27th March, 1898, signed by Russia and China in Peking, it was specifically stated in Article 4 that "the control of all military forces in the territory leased by Russia and of all naval forces in the adjacent seas, as well as the civil officials in it, shall be vested in one high Russian official, who shall, however, be designated by some title other than Governor-General (Tsung-tu) or Governor (Hsün-fu). . . ." It was therefore necessary for Russia to act with circumspection, for the Russo-Chinese Agreement plainly showed that the Peking authorities were even then timorous about the ultimate fate of Manchuria owing to the questionable private arrangements Li Hung Chang had entered into with the Czar's Ministers in St. Petersburg and Moscow at the time of the Imperial Coronation ceremonies of the young Czar in 1896.

It was not until the Boxer uprising that Russia became more self-reliant. In that year Alexeieff was appointed Commander-in-Chief of Russia's land and sea forces and began his forward policy modelled after that which had earned for Muravief the title of "Count of the Amur" forty years before. Admiral Alexeieff's appointment was deemed necessary in order to unite under one head the scattered forces which had been poured into Manchuria during the great invasion. Gordekof, the Governor-General of the Amur province, could not get on with the great sea-captain; neither could the generals from the Baikal province make up their minds to be subservient to a man who was, according to their ideas, a parvenu. But Alexeieff had powerful friends at court and in 1900 succeeded in getting all his rivals placed in the Imperial black books, and his own authority greatly increased. In spite of his largely increased powers, those who have been behind the scenes in Manchuria agree that Alexeieff's orders were often ignored by the military in the post-Boxer years and that the de Witte—Lamsdorff party encouraged revolt against the decrees of a protégé of their political rivals. The agitation aroused by Russia's continued occupation of Manchuria led to the signature of that self-denying ordinance—the Evacuation Protocol of April, 1902, and it then seemed for a time as if Admiral Alexeieff's star was on the wane. But in the spring of 1903 both he and his able lieutenants had so convinced the protecting Grand Dukes of the absolute necessity of consolidating Russian power in Manchuria instead of unconditionally retreating, that the barometer of Alexeieff's fortunes began to rise again; finally the summer of 1903 saw the Moderates of Russian politics defeated, and, with the virtual retirement of de Witte, there was no one of sufficient importance left to oppose Alexeieff's ambitions. Accordingly, in August, his appointment to the Viceroyalty of the Far East was announced, and the entire Russian Far East made subordinate to him. The special point of interest for Manchuria was the peculiar wording of the Ukase which conferred such

great and unexpected powers on a single man, who owed his rise to clever card playing. In the Ukase of the 13th August, Admiral Alexeieff is made the Viceroy of the Far East, and "is granted supreme power for the maintenance of order and security in the zone of the Eastern Railway of China, as well as providing for the needs of the Russian population in the frontier possessions beyond the Imperial Lieutenancy." . . . The importance of these words can hardly be overestimated, for the preamble of the Imperial Decree having stated that "the territories of the Amur and Kuantung should henceforth form a special lieutenancy," it becomes clear that the three provinces of Manchuria sandwiched in between the Russian province of the Amur and the Kuantung leased territory, crossed by a railway along whose "frontiers" Russia possessed policing rights, and placed under the sole control of an ambitious man henceforth responsible only to a committee of persons nominated by the Emperor and presided over by his Imperial Majesty, were already marked as won, and coloured Siberian green on the maps. Viceroy Alexeieff having secured the defeat of his political opponents in Russia, could act as he pleased, and since he was unwilling to retreat from the position he had created entirely by his own efforts, war has been the result. But a peculiar point to which I would direct special attention is the use of the words "frontier possessions beyond the Imperial Lieutenancy." The railway guards of the Chinese Eastern Railway are called "frontier guards"; the population of Harbin is a "frontier population," although the Russian frontier of the Amur is several hundred miles away; the Russian Viceroy is specially charged with looking after this population, although it lives on a soil to which Russia renounced all claims in the Evacuation of April, 1902; in a word, Russia in this audacious Decree cut a strip of Empire through the heart of Manchuria, the frontiers of which are protected by frontier guards to the number of 22,000, and thus on paper united the trans-Baikal to Russian Primorsk by means of the railway strip, and likewise the Russian

province of the Amur with the leased province or territory of Kuantung. Had Japan, therefore, not intervened, Manchuria in a few short years would have been calmly robbed from China without anything but paper protests from the rest of the world. Finally, it is well to note that a large number of high Russian officers in the Far East detest Admiral Alexeieff and oppose him at every step.

THE END.

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